

THE AFTER-DINNER SERIES.

CELEBRATED

COURTEZANS.

Translated from the French of

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BY

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LAIS.

NON *cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum* ;
(It does not happen to every man to go to Corinth), Horace says, Epistles I, 17, 36, for, certainly, if the Corinthian girls were beautiful, they were very expensive. The merchant, who had grown rich by commerce in distant countries; the soldier, laden with the spoils of Asia; the victor in the Isthmian games, who had been loaded with presents by his fellow citizens; strangers, who had come from those fabulous countries where gold and precious stones abounded, these alone venture to go to the city of pleasure, for they alone were able to pay. Sometimes, a

young man who was in love with her, and who had nothing to offer except his youth and his love, succeeded as well as the wealthy stranger, but that depended on her caprice, and a caprice soon passes over, and no one need expect to find real love here, for here love was not the end, but the means. The women did not love from passion, but as a profession, and voluptuousness was so much merchandize, pleasure was a market commodity, and their amorous frenzy was a sport. The hetaira, the courtesan, laid those snares; she exchanged that market commodity, she provided the merchandize. But it was useless to ask anything more of her. One might just as well have asked the fat trader, who was coming to the harbour, driving his donkeys, laden with leather bottles, for a measure of oil for nothing. Measure for measure! Show your drachm and you shall be served; but if your hand is empty, draw your cloak over your head and go on your way without looking at the beautiful young women. Take the first ship that is going to sail, and go! Better a country without courtesans, than a country of courtesans when she has no money. Better to eat a raw onion in a cow stall, than to gaze with hunger at the door of a palace, where

the joyous guests are having a joyous orgie!

And then, do not exclaim or get angry, and play the moralist! Why? What good would it do you to blow out your cheeks, to frown, and to blow through your nostrils like an orator when he comes to his peroration? All that you can say will not alter matters in the least, and besides, just think for a moment. Are not these girls right? You must remember that they have wasted their youth, worn out their heart, and lost their life in advance, in order to learn this trade, and that they juggle with pleasure, like a sophist does with words. Do you wish them to have worked for nothing? And if you pay the philosopher who teaches you wisdom, the coryphæus who teaches you music, and the rhetorician who teaches you eloquence, why should you not pay the courtesan who teaches you the language, the music and the philosophy of love?

Remember also, that to carry on this business it is necessary to have a shop, that is to say, a house built of marble; to have carpets, statues, bronze vases, a palace overflowing with luxury; remember that this luxury is not to be found under an acanthus leaf, but that it has to be

bought, and ask yourself finally *who* has to pay for all this, if not you or somebody like you?

Look at that palace, not far from the harbour, at the end of that alley of olive trees; follow that motley, merry, laughing crowd, which is listening at the portico to the music that is being played inside. Go in with one of the privileged persons who are admitted into those *Elysian* fields of pleasure, and look at the numberless, priceless objects that surround you. It is the house of the famous Lais, the most beautiful courtesan in Corinth.

The walls are of Parian marble, and are gilded by the sun. Columns of red porphyry and green malachite expand into broad leaves, in which the stone seems to live and ready to be torn. Numerous friezes follow all the lines of the architecture, and display the equestrian conceptions of Phidias and the amorous processions of Praxiteles. The floor is flagged with variegated mosaics, where the mysteries of Aphrodite are depicted in intertwined figures, so that one cannot walk a step without treading on some delicious representation of the most ardent voluptuous pleasures, and it almost seems as if all those unions of form and colour tickle the soles of your feet, in order to

convey the tingling of delirious pleasures to your heart.

Slaves of various nationalities move about under the portico, bringing delicious dishes and rare wines for the guests. Negroes pass by, dressed in red cotton drawers, and balance baskets full of African grapes on their woolly heads to the rhythmical cadence of their steps. White-skinned, fair-haired Scythians, are carrying gold or silver dishes, on which venison from Thrace is smoking. One might say that the North and South, all the nations of the earth, were united in easy and pleasant servitude and had come to offer their presents to the queen of beauty, whose caprices governed men.

Let us go in through that ivory door, incrustated with tortoise-shell, where the stream of hurrying servants go in, and whence there issue the merry sounds of the feast.

This is not a *gynæceum* or women's apartment, such as was found in all the houses in Greece. Here, there was neither the cold, calm, industrious housewife, spinning amongst her maids, nor that white and timid band of female servants, sewing in silence. This is a hall of festivity, a court of voluptuous enjoyment, the temple of

luxury. Instead of the pervading calm of ^{the} homes, it is the striking and dazzling ^{of} wealth and pleasure. The walls are painted, the floor is covered with Asiatic carpets, the ceiling is formed by a large purple curtain, and the light, which is at the same time clear and subdued, and which passes through the crystal, heightens the effect of the paintings on the walls and of the variegated carpets.

Some twenty men, who had been selected ^{from} amongst the crowd of aspirants for her favour, were there, tasting the pleasures of an orgie ^{which} was worthy of the God, and enjoying ⁱⁿ ^{the} bargain all the unspeakable charm of ^{being} admitted to contemplate the Divinity of Olympus.

Like the slaves, and slaves themselves, represented the nations of the world at the feet of Lais. A rich Egyptian merchant elbow'd a barbarian chief, a satrap from distant Bactria was lying on the same couch as a young Attic youth who was making fun of his effeminacy, a rich Theban, who had been crowned at the Olympic games, was showing a slim Lesbian his arms and his square chest, and in a corner, a Spartan, a soldier, who had grown rich,

service of a foreigner, was emptying his last goblet with difficulty, and stammered out curses on the name of Lycurgus.

Her favourites of the day were next to Lais: an old Sicilian, who had just arrived at Corinth with three galleys laden with silver dust; a common sailor, belonging to one of the galleys; a strong, well-built Spaniard, and a young man, with a proud bearing.

The old man was bald, and his shaven and wrinkled face looked like a dried fig, whilst his little stomach looked like a leather bottle. He balanced himself on his short, thin legs, and often showed his claw-like hands, that were covered with priceless rings.

The sailor did not understand as yet why that beautiful woman wished him to remain at table with his master, and looked about him in a bold and defying manner. Certainly neither his smooth, protruding forehead, his thin cheeks, where the muscles of the jaw showed every time he moved them, or his neck, which was like a bundle of taut ropes, could possibly account for Lais' desire for him; perhaps, what she liked in him was the fever that parched his lips, made his eyes moist and his temples throb.

The youth was a Gaul, who had started alone on his travels when he was sixteen, in order to obey his mother's wish, who was a Druidess who had broken her vows. His long, light hair, which was flung back, let all the light from above fall into his blue-grey, bright and bold eyes.

Lying carelessly on a Persian cushion at the feet of Lais, crowned with roses, with his tunic open and with a smile on his face, a man was slowly sipping Cretan wine out of an onyx goblet. That was Aristippus, the philosopher, the delicate epicurean, who was the courtesan's daily guest.

"But my dear friend," she said to the old man, "your philosophy does not please me at all. What good have all these years of painful labour done you? Why have you been tiring yourself all your life?"

"In order to get rich, so as to be able to pay for my pleasures."

"Your pleasures? Can you enjoy any now that you are so old? Consider, my friend, all the trouble you have had to reach that goal to which you attain too late. You have suffered from winds, tempests and pirates, and several times you have lost your fortune."

"I have always made it again."

"That may be, but you worked for it, and your mind was troubled and uneasy. You were obliged to make calculations, to superintend your workmen, to think of expedients, to protect yourself against envious persons and to overcome your enemies. By Dionysos,* what torture! And you call that happiness! Happiness, my friend, consists in peace and quietness; the whole of philosophy is contained in these two words. Not to be troubled or worried is the highest pleasure. No troubles and no too vivid pleasures. Not too much of anything! Mediocrity in everything is my rule. Just see how happy and contented I look, and how much happier I am than you."

"Aristippus is right," the Athenian said, coming up to them.

"You are all wrong," a fresh personage said, standing up behind Lais' couch.

And Diogenes, the cynic, appeared in his ragged cloak, with his beard untrimmed, his hair sticking up, and his skin dirty, but with a bold manner, a proud look, and sarcasm on his lips.

"Yes," he continued, "You are all wrong. You, Aristippus, in the first place do not know what you are talking about. Were you not talking

*The Greek for Bacchus, the God of Wine. (Translator).

about peace and quietness just now? Well, what peace can you enjoy, as you spend your whole life in disputing, arguing and proving? You reproach workmen for having horny hands, but just show your tongue, for it must be horny also, considering the length of time you have been using it "

And then, turning to the other guests, he began to insult them also, whilst Aristippus emptied his goblet unconcernedly, and Lais laughed at the Cynic's bitter words

"Just look at that Theban ox," he cried, "who is so proud of his flesh, he is not a man, he is a butcher's stall And why does that curled Athenian do the big? He smells of the rancid oil that his father sells, and what is that Satrap dreaming of, who is always asleep? I propose that we put him under the couch, so that it may sleep on him, we should not perceive any difference What a miser that Spartan, who is stretched in the corner yonder, is! Instead of paying a helot to drink for him, he gets drunk himself "

Lais laughed more and more Nobody ventured to answer the Cynic, who shared the courtesan's intimate acquaintance and favours with Aristippus But her turn was to come also, for on that day Diogenes was more bitter and

biting than usual, and the arrival of the wealthy old Sicilian, and the sight of the handsome young Gaul, excited his jealousy.

"Well," he exclaimed, "by the dog, just let me tell you that you are all fools, and require my words to bring you to your right senses, as if they were a grain of hellebore. What are you here for? For Lais, of course. And what is Lais? You think she is difficult to get, and you say that she is irresistible, but you are mistaken. She is not difficult to get, because she is going to give herself to that old abortion from Sicily, whose first ancestor was one of the filthy Cyclopes. She is not irresistible either. Do you know the story of her amours with Xenocrates, Plato's disciple? Well, she went to his house to excite his passions, so she showed him everything that you would like to see, and hugged him in her arms, and kissed him on the lips, but he remained as cold as a statue under her caresses. Ah! Lais! Lais! you will be dishonoured amongst posterity for that defeat, and that day I despised you, and if I, the Cynic, occasionally consent to enjoy your favours, it is in order that I may rid myself of my vermin, who prefer your delicate skin to my tanned leather."

They were all stupefied at his audacity, and even Lais, who was used to the Cynic's freedom of speech, now pretended to smile, with ill-concealed displeasure, as she was very vexed by that unfortunate allusion to Xenocrates, and a frown passed over her brow, like a gust of wind over a beautiful lake.

The Gaul had not understood a word of what Diogenes had been saying; he only saw, from Lais' face that she had been offended at what he had said, so with one bound he leapt at the philosopher's throat and threw him down, and he would have struck him, if a sign from Lais had not stopped him.

"By the dog," the Cynic said, as he got up amidst the jeers of all who were there, "here is a man indeed! He speaks but little, but his arguments are decidedly strong. Engage him for the night, Lais; he will console you for the loss of Xenocrates."

At that moment, a grave-looking man came in, with his head half-covered by a cloak, as if he had wished to conceal his features carefully as he came, and when he went up to Lais, he allowed that species of veil to fall. All the Greeks recognised him by his thin, stern face, his deep-set

bright eyes and his protruding brow, and were about to applaud him, when he imposed silence on them, and then said:—

“Lais, you know me, although you have never seen me, for I am Demosthenes, and I salute you.”

“What have you come here for?”

“I have come to ask for your love until to-morrow morning.”

“You are not particularly good looking!”

“But I am a great man.”

“You don’t look very vigorous.”

“But I am celebrated.”

“Are you rich?”

“Not as rich as the king of Persia, but richer than Diogenes. How much do you want?”

“A thousand drachmas*.”

Demosthenes put his forefinger to his brow, like a man who is thinking; at one moment his eyes rested, with evident pleasure on Lais, and then assumed a reflective look, as if he were speaking to himself. He hesitated, but at last he put his cloak over his head again and said:—

*The Attic drachma was worth about ninepence three farthings, the Ægineton, a shilling and a penny. The former is most likely meant here. (Translator.)

"That would be buying repentance at too high a price."

When he had gone out Diogenes said —

"That man is right in sticking to his money, for he earns it honourably."

"That man is too great," Aristippus continued, "he will die a violent death."

"Did you notice," the Athenian asked, "how curt he was with me?"

"Let us drink," the old Sicilian said. "I will buy that repentance which he considers too dear. Kiss me Lais. I will pay fifty thousand drachmas for that repentance."

"Kiss me," the Satrap said waking up, "I will give you a whole city."

But Lais kissed the young Gaul.

II

6

A courtesan's business is a hard one, for the flower of beauty withers quickly at the fire of pleasure. Ten years had passed and Lais was no longer the queen of her world. She was still beautiful, but her beauty was like the autumn

sun; she had lost the freshness of spring and the glow of summer; winter was coming on.

Aristippus and Diogenes had gone; Satraps no longer came. The rich old men had also taken flight, as they preferred younger fruit, and her present lovers did not pay her so well, for the glory of possessing Lais was no longer valued so highly. The dregs of the cup are not worth so much as its whole contents; and then, how many lips had touched its edge! The young, handsome and vigorous men were no longer inclined to give their youth, their beauty and their vigour; they sold them, and so, instead of increasing, the great courtesan's wealth diminished, like her celebrity

• In a short time, she would be entirely forgotten, and she, still proud and ardent, would employ the remains of her vigour and luxury in order to satisfy her insatiable desires, and to revive some of her former splendour.

The rebuff she had received from Xenocrates had been but a small matter compared with those she was soon to experience. She had never cared for Xenocrates, and had only wished to tempt him from caprice, and because she had made a bet that she should succeed, and now she was going to suffer that torture, so terrible to women who have

hitherto been adored, of loving and of being despised .

Amongst the competitors who had come to take part in the Olympic games, there was one who attracted all eyes, on account of his really divine beauty. He was a young, hitherto unknown Cyrenian, and had been training for a long time at home, in the hopes of one day winning the glorious palm-wreath which immortalizes the conqueror in the contest, and which makes his native city renowned. His name was Eubates, and Lais saw him and fell in love with him, but he remained quite insensible to her allurements, to her marks of tenderness, to her wealth and renown. Nevertheless, he was neither a Platonic philosopher, who shunned women on principle, nor was his a heart of stone, which was inaccessible to love. He loved, indeed, but another woman than Lais, for in Cyrene he had left a mistress who was proud of him, and to whom he wished to remain faithful.

When Lais learnt the cause of his coldness, it spurred her on, instead of disheartening her. Here was a conquest worthy of her. To win that superb man, whom all Greece would, perhaps, be applauding soon, and to tear him from the arms

of a beloved mistress, would indeed be a triumph !

Like a competitor who puts forth all his strength in a last, supreme effort, so Lais employed all her arts, seductions and amorous energy to win him. Animated by passion, warmed by the violence of her desires, she became as beautiful again as she had been formerly, beautiful with that second youth which blossoms up in women when they are soon to cease being beautiful, and attach themselves desperately to their last lover, and in spite of his firm resolve, Eubates was disturbed, for he could not altogether resist the powerful influence and the voluptuous charms of Lais, and so he gave her hope, and promised her that if he were successful in the competition, he would take her to Cyrene, and Lais was proud and happy.

Eubates was crowned at the Olympic games, but the joy of his triumph, the intoxication at having obtained his object, the plaudits of the whole of Greece, overcame his weakness. He remembered that love, which he had forgotten for a moment, and the woman whom he adored, who had sustained him by her affection when he was as yet unknown, who had shared his hopes, and who, he had resolved, should share his triumphs,

and so he returned to Cyrene, but in order that he might keep his promise to Lais, he took her picture with him. His mistress, who was happy at his double victory, raised a statue to Pallas, everybody united with her in admiring her lover's constancy, and Lais became the table talk of the whole of Greece.

That was the last blow. Her glory was undermined and her fortune followed the same road, whilst her beauty lost its last glow, and soon the poor *hetaira* became a common, despised courtesan, whom everybody scoffed at.

In comedy, during her life, she was the type of the prostitute grown old, and Epicrates paints her thus, in his play, called *The Anti-Lais*.

Lais has nothing to do, and has taken to drinking. She wanders round the tables, like those birds of prey which in their vigour swoop down from the summits of the mountains, and carry off young lambs and kids, but who, when they have grown old perch sadly on the roofs of the temples, devoured by hunger. What a sinister augury! In her springtime, Lais was wealthy and proud, and it was more difficult to gain access to her than to the Satrap Pharnabazes. But she has arrived at her last season, her

temple is in ruins, and is very easy to enter. A stater, would seem a fortune to her, and she accepts any man, whether young or old, without looking at him. Age has so reduced her pride that she will even stretch out her hand for a few copper coins.*

Alas! Such is the miserable end of many courtezans. At the sight of their withered bodies men forget their former beauty, and ungrateful men cannot respect in them that marvellous shape, which formerly unfolded in the flower of their beauty and in the splendour of their amours.

If we are to believe Plutarch, the death of Lais was not a commonplace one, that of old courtezans generally is.

Once more she loved, and for the last time. A young Thessalian, named Hippolochus, took her away from Corinth, where she was wearing away in oblivion and misery, and took her to his own country; but he had reckoned without those storms of passion which were still rumbling in that satiated, but yet unassauged, heart. As if all the voluptuous pleasures of the past had returned to inflame her desires, Lais, who was more ardent than ever, wore out her lover, who was incapable

*About three shillings. (Translator.)

of satisfying the inextinguishable thirst that devoured her. He wished to flee from her, but she pursued him, until one day, frightened at her amorous fury, he took refuge in a temple of Aphrodite (Venus). Without any respect for the sanctity of the place, she went in also, and threw herself upon her prey in transports of frenzied passion, when the enraged priestesses stoned her to death at the foot of the altar.

Not until after her death did men remember Lais. The hatred which her contempt had excited was forgotten, and the jests about her age had gone out of fashion, and people only remembered how beautiful she had been, what a sun of voluptuous pleasure her youth had been, and so Lais was honoured. That Greek nation which was so enamoured of beauty of form, understood that honour ought to be paid to a woman, who had been a model of beauty. A nation which crowned athletes, would be sure to adore the *hetairai* (courtezans). And Corinth raised a tomb to the great courtesan near the river Peneus, in the district where Lais died. This inscription, worthy of her and of the Greeks, was inscribed on her tombstone

Greece, which was formerly invincible and

great through her heroes, has been enslaved by the divine beauty of Lais, whom Eros (Cupid) begot, whom Corinth formed, and who is lying here, in the noble, Thessalian land.

PHRYNE

THE courtesan Phryne, the queen of Greek courtezans, the most perfect model of female beauty amongst the ancients, flourished at the same period as Lais, and was even more beautiful and renowned than the latter

‘ Phryne, the Thespian,” her friends the *hetærai* (courtezans) said, but “Phryne, the avaricious,” the comic poets snarled, whilst the common people declared that she was Phryne, the Aphrodite, Phryne from Cyprus, and Phryne, the Thespian, was certainly looked upon as the most avaricious of courtezans. She would only go with the man who offered the most. Rich merchants

from Athens, wealthy settlers, rich colonists who had returned from Asia and Sicily, passing strangers, had no right to her favours, except by paying. She was never known to bestow her love gratuitously, and she never felt any of those slight, capricious passions, which renounce the gold of an old man for the roses which are blooming on the cheeks of a poor beardless youth. She would certainly never have been guilty of the weaknesses of Lais, overflowing with wealth, and offering the banquet of love to a lover who was merely amiable, until he was satiated with it. She was not the woman to pursue Hippolochus as far as Thessaly, for she required a lover who could satisfy all her luxurious whims, a man whose heart shed golden tears, and whose hand, when it pressed hers, would put the price of the promised caress, and more than one young Athenian and handsome Asiatic, in search of adventures, lost their time in coming to her door to wait for a smile, which might give them hope. The slave on duty at the threshold looked underneath their cloaks, and if he saw nothing but a well made shape he used to asked them what they had brought.

“Flowers,” they replied; “roses, lilies, and

violets, and also our expanding twenty years, and our amorous kisses "

" All that is not worth the drachmas," the slave replied " Your boyish presents are the copper coins of the poor, and your presents of flowers are the offerings of a gardener "

And she brutally shut the cruel door in their faces, and even if they succeeded in gaining access to the presence of their goddess, reckoning on the gracefulness of their gifts, and on the bright flame of love that shone in their eyes, they merely found an impassive woman with a mocking look in her eyes, who did not look either at their beautiful, artificially curled hair, nor at their supple and perfumed limbs nor at their fresh and vigorous love sap, nor at their bouquets and smiles, but who, when she deigned to open her mouth, made bitter fun of them

" What do you come begging here for ? ' she used to say " Here is a nice pack of fellows coming to beg secretly for love, and offering their youth to Phryne, who is eternally young What do I want with your roses and your lilies ? My body is a much more beautiful flower bed than is to be found in any of your small gardens in the suburbs What do I want with your pale and

paltry violets? Those in the April of my eyes, are far brighter and warmer. There! go back to your fathers' shops, and learn from them that every piece of merchandize has its price, and that honey and wheat and ivory and robes, dyed with Tyrian purple, do not fling themselves away in payment for a love song, that nothing is given, but that everything has its price. Sell something yourselves, also, as they have done; go and work in the *Piræus*, go to sea, and then, when you have grown rich, come and buy me, for I am for sale."

And they took their leave, all of them thirsting for gain, desirous of working, in order to procure the price of her delicious embraces. And thus the honest, straightforward courtesan, whom envious poets called avaricious and bad, exercised her calling conscientiously, and contributed greatly to the success of enterprise and to the welfare of the republic, by the taste for commerce that she aroused in young men.

And was it not fair, after all, that she should make the merchants pay for her body, as they made her pay with her body, for her palace, her purple hangings, her fêtes, her luxury? And would she not have been more guilty in yielding

to the desires of young men, if she had thus given them the love of idleness and of pleasures which they had enjoyed without any trouble?

And then she did nothing to excite desire, and was not one of those women who attract customers by the bait of scarcely veiled nudities. She despised ostentation parade and external show, all those habitual manœuvres of courtezans who let their person be seen, in order to excite desire. She considered that beauty had no need of any such artifices and she went even further in her ideas of amorous commerce, and would have thought that she was prostituting the splendour of her divine beauty at a shameful price had she shown it off every day to the vulgar herd.

Thus she lived like a modest matron, and was *more secluded in her palace devoted to love than were mothers of families in their gynoecea** going out at long intervals, avoiding crowded assemblies the theatre public places, every spot where she could not help being seen. When she went out she was dressed in ample robes which concealed her figure, and covered by a veil which hid her face. She looked upon that marvellous beauty which constituted her fortune her glory

* Women's apartmen s (Translator)

and her pride, as a treasure of which she ought not to be too lavish, and it was by that, even more than by her cupidity, that she showed herself niggardly.

Oh! She was niggardly indeed, as she deprived people of the sight of her, as she was niggardly of herself, as she behaved like those timid hoarders, who think that their gold is badly guarded if it be seen though ever so little.

But was she really avaricious, that woman who embellished Corinth with its most beautiful monuments, and who, after Thebes was laid in ruins by Alexander, proposed to the Thebans to rebuild the city at her own expense? That, of course, was offering to sacrifice her whole fortune, but the Thebans refused, because the courtesan made it a condition that this inscription should be placed on the gates of the city :

"Thebes was destroyed by Alexander, and rebuilt by Phryne."

Certainly no avaricious woman would have thus offered to exchange her enormous wealth for a single line of glorification, and that was the constant object of her most ardent wishes.

What did she care for riches? She knew that with her marvellous beauty she could never be

poor, and that if she were to spend one fortune, she could make ten more. What did she care for being loved? She had been loved so much that she had grown tired of it, and then, loved by whom? By merchants who had grown rich, by vain libertines and by curious foreigners. What did she care for all that number of adorers? Was she capable of love herself? Amongst so many who were called should she choose one? For shame! She knew the supremacy of her loveliness too well to lower herself to love, a queen ought not to love a subject, and it would have required a god to have made the heart of that goddess beat with emotion. What then were riches, luxury, pleasure, or even love itself, to her? Less than nothing.

But glory! Ah! That alone could pay for her love! To be Phryne not only for ten or twenty years, but for ever! To be admired by posterity! To be loved after her death! To feel that she would have the sway over centuries by her beauty, and that in the future a court of nations would prostrate itself before her! To cease to be a woman, in order to become the incarnation of a type, to become the living image of grace and perfection! To be Aphrodite! That was what the divine

courtezan wished, and in default of a god, she would love the man who could make her a goddess, and Phryne, the cold; Phyrne, the avaricious; Phryne, the cruel, one day opened her heart and loved.

Whom did she love? Gods?

Yes, artists; she loved Praxiteles, the sculptor, and Apelles, the painter.

At that period, Greek art did not seem able to surpass the austere magnificence of Phidias. Inspired by the lofty traditions of Ægina, and adding life and truth to them, Phidias and his school had attained to the power giving expression to divine beauty in its highest form. The immortal types of Olympus became realized in their calm and grand majesty, but there still remained one goddess, whose beauty had indeed been dreamt of, although it had never found expression either in painting or sculpture. That was Aphrodite (Venus), the perfection of female beauty, the smile of nature, the grace of creation. Zeus (Jupiter), in his terrible grandeur; Phœbus (Apollo) the king of light in the splendour of his rays; Artemis (Diana), tranquil and haughty in her austere chastity; Athene (Minerva), inflexible in her virile virtue; all the Olympians, whether

placid or fierce, inhabited the emples. Great figures of them in majestic attitudes and with grave faces on the Acropolis and in the temples. These seemed to live; but who could make Aphrodite, graceful and lovely as she was, live again? Could bronze or marble be made to assume her careless attitudes, the roundness of her breasts, the undulating lines of her loins and hips, the voluptuous roundness of her arms, of her neck and of her stomach? What mind would venture to imagine such outlines, or what hand could reproduce them? Or rather, what human model could supply artists with the idea of such perfection?

Phryne was that human model. She went to Praxiteles, and without asking any other recompense than the glory of serving as his model, she showed herself naked before his astonished and delighted eyes. She left her palace, forsook her lovers and renounced her wealth in order to live in the sculptor's studio, giving herself up entirely to him, and thanks to that union of genius and beauty, Aphrodite at last assumed a visible shape.

That statue, which became the Venus of Cnidos in history, is the perfect type of the goddess; graceful and vigorous, natural and coquettish, and

is characterised by a kind of chaste voluptuousness, which it is impossible to define.

The goddess is represented as standing up naked; her bust is thrown slightly forward, and her head is inclined towards the right. She seems to be looking at her drapery which had just before veiled her body, and which is now lying in heavy folds on a large vase, whilst her hand, which is hanging down, gracefully prevents it from falling to the ground. Her right hand, from an impulse of irritating modesty, hides that secret portion of her body, which men should not be permitted to profane by their looks; Praxiteles had been allowed see it, and it seems as if his jealous love had wished to prevent future centuries from gazing on it.

That statue, Pliny says, is not only the most beautiful that Praxiteles ever sculptured, but the most beautiful in Greece, and in the whole world. That does not seem to be an exaggerated opinion if we remember that up to that time the sculptor's chisel had not given expression to the conception of the most beautiful and beloved of the deities of antiquity, in such harmonious lines, and with such inspiration. By the side of the other figures of Olympus, which are too imposing and too stern,

that of Aphrodite (Venus) must have appeared all the more charming, as it revealed a whole new world of grace and of voluptuous caresses. It was not only a goddess, the mother of desire, and the dream of men's hearts, but it was the entire woman, a goddess whom they admired and longed to possess.

The inhabitants of Cnidos bought the statue, and placed it on the top of a low hill, in a temple which was open on all sides. From whatever direction people came, they saw the Cyprian goddess stand out against the sky, equally beautiful from all sides, and it was not necessary to look at her from the front to fall on the knees before that divine and imperishable loveliness. Thus the renown of Cnidos was established, the Cnicians perfectly understood that fact, as, at a later period, when their town was overwhelmed by an enormous debt, they refused to sell their statue to King Nicomedes for the amount of their debt. They preferred anything, even ruin itself, even the sale of their houses, to the pain of losing her, who was their glory. They consented to work ceaselessly, to give up their ships, to remain without shelter in their own country, to live poor and despised by their powerful neigh-

bours, provided that the consolation of being able to look at the *Cypris* (Venus) of Praxiteles, which was the image of Phryne. What earthly possessions, what riches, what pleasures could equal the enormous wealth of that possession, the sublime joy of that enjoyment?

Praxiteles, like all artist-lovers, had immortalised his mistress; but rightly fearing that at length people would forget the model in admiring the goddess, and wishing that Phryne should live in person as long as the *Cypris*, he was not satisfied with merely that statue, but he also painted the courtesan's portrait. Two pictures exactly reproduced the exquisite portions of her body, and the intoxicating charm of her attitudes. The one was sent to her birthplace, Thespiæ, and the other, a gilt statue, was consecrated in the temple of Delphi, the *rendezvous* of the whole of Greece, and there, in the very abode of the gods, might be read this inscription, carved by Praxiteles himself on the pedestal of Pentelic marble:—

THIS IS PHRYNE, THE THESPIAN.

As the Venus of Cnidos was the master-piece of Praxiteles, so the Venus Anadyomene was the

master-piece of Apelles, for the great painter was also allowed to draw inspiration from Phryne's perfect form. She wished to become his mistress, and on this occasion again asked for no other payment for her beauty except the glory of having been his model.

None of the works of Appelles are extant, as is the case with all Greek paintings, but from the testimony of antiquity we can judge that Greek painters did not yield the palm to Greek sculptors. Happily, although the picture itself has been destroyed, descriptions of it remain, and it is even asserted that certain antique cameoes are engraved reproductions of that master-piece. Appelles had represented Cypris springing from the foam of the sea. The whole upper portion of the goddess's body is naked, and shivering in the air, whilst the lower portion is vaguely discernible under the soft, and transparent caresses of the waves, whilst light, flaky foam forms a girdle of humid kisses round her loins. With her two round arms she wrings out the water from her hair, which is divided into two unequal masses, for the left hand holds only a few curls, whilst the right is buried in the thick locks from which the water streams. Her face expresses a kind of

innocent and happy astonishment, the surprise and the joy of living, and the sea extends to the horizon, and palpitates with love at this radiant apparition.

If we are to believe some historians, Phryne soon grew accustomed to the pleasure of being deified, and she served as the model for every Venus that was painted or sculptured during her time. Every artist with any real reputation for skill, could thus possess the avaricious courtesan, who made others pay so dearly for the smallest caress, for nothing. One cannot too much admire the woman who, quite insensible to the youth or the love of her adorers, allowed herself to be moved by genius and talent, or the *hetaira*, the courtesan, who appeared to despise love, and who only consented to love men who were capable of understanding her beauty. That complaisance for artists, and that desire for the admiration of posterity, did not spring from a vulgar mind, and it was, thanks to that feeling, that Phryne saw her own form become that of a goddess, and that she left behind her the memory of being the most beautiful and the most perfect of women. &

It is not, however, always good to have such a reputation during life, and this Phryne discovered,

for others envied her, who had nothing to envy, and hatred clustered round her, who hated no one

The attack did not come, as might have been expected, from her fellow courtezans, who might at any rate have had some excuse for being jealous of her beauty and of her good fortune. The attack came from married women, whom she could not scandalize, however, thanks to the modesty of her outward life. No doubt, stories of ruined husbands, of lovers led astray and of sons corrupted, were at the bottom of this hostility, and one can understand the hostility of some mothers of families on that account. But such causes are not enough to explain the general coalition that was formed against her in the *gynæcea* and we must seek for other motives. Perhaps the strongest was that very modesty of which we spoke above. Virtuous women were angry with this courtesan, who, whilst enjoying life, whilst amassing wealth and indulging in every caprice of pleasure and luxury, yet found means of remaining discreet and almost chaste, and of being respected, as if she had been an honest matron. A woman might be forgiven for robbing mothers of their sons, wives of their husbands and

girls of their lovers, for that was an every day occurrence, but that a *hetaira* should share with legitimate wives that respect which was due to them alone, was what they could not endure, and what made them decide on Phryne's ruin.

They allied themselves to men who had been politely shown out by the courtesan, and who bore her a grudge for having found them too poor or too disagreeable. Some of her lovers who had had access to the house, and who had been sent about their business as soon as they were ruined, joined that small army, and supplied it with weapons by divulging secrets of the bed, or of orgies, which contrasted singularly with the *hetaira's* apparent reserve. They knew that she prided herself on being as beautiful as a goddess, and that she pushed her pride so far, as occasionally to insist upon being worshipped like them, and that at some private festivities she had, half joking, and half seriously, instituted some kind of religious mysteries, in which she played the part of the divinity, and it was said that she preached the love of sensual pleasure and the neglect of virtue to her lovers. Condemnable utterances were laid to her charge, amongst others this: That if the whole people were one man and she

wished to buy Athens, the people would sell it to her for one night of love; and from all those rumours, words and actions, true or false, they soon made up a regular prosecuting counsel's speech, which was very threatening for Phryne.

A certain Euthias, a kind of chattering and malicious sophist, who had aspired to her favours, and who had several times been repulsed with scorn, undertook their common revenge, whilst at the same time he should make sure of having his own. He drew up a formal deed of accusation, and had Phryne cited before the tribunal of the Helasts for having led young men astray, for having insulted the Republic, blasphemed the gods, and for having profaned the sacred mysteries of religion by impious imitations. It was a matter of capital punishment, should she be found guilty,

And here we meet with a very curious feature in morals, which astonishes us at first. It seems natural to human selfishness, that the news of such a danger should have filled the other *hetairai* with joy, as they would profit by the ruin of their rival. The judges were about to make her, whose beauty quite threw theirs into the shade, to whom the richest lovers brought their offerings, and

who had thus deprived them of their most splendid chances of fortune, disappear from the scene. The misfortunes of a rival are always pleasant, and the courtezans ought to be satisfied. But no! They formed a counter-league out of admiration for their uncontested queen, out of anger against those virtuous women, out of a fellow-feeling, and did all they could with influential citizens, who they knew and could sway to make the accusation miscarry.

The conspiracy of hatred was stronger, however, and Phryne was obliged to come and defend herself before the judges. Myrrhina, one of her companions, thereupon offered her her own lover, the celebrated Hyperides, who was one of the most celebrated advocates of the period, to defend her.

Phryne came on the appointed day, as modest as ever in her bearing, her body entirely enveloped in a long robe, which entirely coucealed her from all eyes, with a veil over her face and a grave demeanour. An immense crowd was waiting for her on the *agora*, or market-place, where the trial was to take place, and there was a quiver of excitement when she appeared, escorted by the *hetairai*, her companions, with the whole body of men who had been her lovers, following behind

like a battalion of her defenders. She did not seem to have come for trial but for triumph.

She listened to the enumeration of the terrible charges that were brought against her without any signs of fear, and only replied to Euthias' venomous speech by silent disdain, and merely turned her beautiful eyes towards Hyperides, when that orator rose to speak in his turn, and he never made a more eloquent defence. He showed by what machinations that plot had been contrived; how little reliance could be placed in the calumnies of discarded lovers like Euthias, who were always brooding over their despised love, and who, moreover, only spoke from hearsay of a house into which they had never been admitted; that if they had the more weighty testimony of former lovers, who might have known the accused's mode of life, it was well to remember that these men had to regret the loss of their fortune, or their only partially satisfied desires, and also that the heart of a lover, who had been discarded after a short period of happiness, was even more wounded than the heart of a man who had been politely shown the door altogether from the first, and, therefore it was easy to see that the accusation rested merely on tales that had been invented by

bad men, and had been spread about by credulous fools. All the *hetairai* might be called as witnesses, all the young men who were in court, all who had been present at Phryne's entertainments, all who had had any share in her life, might be called as witnesses; and then it would be seen how greatly praise outweighed reproaches, and on comparing the number of her champions with the number of her accusers, that simple calculation would suffice to bring about Phryne's acquittal. And then, what was the meaning of this accusation of corrupting young men, and of inciting them to the love of pleasure? Was it not her business as a courtesan to make herself loved? Why impute that profession to her as a crime, which the Republic had sanctioned by the laws? In what respect had she failed in her duties? She had never attempted to captivate the heart of any young man by artful wiles, for she never even showed herself in public, and far from seeking lovers, she seemed to wish to keep them at a distance by the modesty of her demeanour, and the high price of her favours. As to the charge of impiety, it had even less foundation than the others. Everyone, as a matter of fact, was aware of the almost austere conduct of the

courtezan, and it was unreasonable to believe that a woman who hardly ever went out except in order to be present at religious ceremonies could join in the impious parodies of religion which were laid to her charge. She certainly might have said in a joke that she was a goddess, meaning that great artists had taken her as a model for Aphrodite*, the Cyprian. But she had never claimed divine honours, and was satisfied with being adored, as no woman on earth had been before. And certainly she was worthy of this, and all who had had the happiness of seeing her were ready to affirm this in the face of heaven, yes and, moreover, if the whole male population of Athens were one single man, it would very likely sell its own city for a kiss from Phryne!

On hearing these words, which Hyperides repeated, as if they had been a claim to renown, the judges, who had been favourable hitherto, appeared to be irritated, and the people also, whom he seemed to be trying to vilify by his words began to murmur. At that instant, however, without apprizing anyone, Hyperides, in a moment of enthusiasm, pulled off the drapery that covered Phryne, and the courtezan appeared naked

*Venus Goddess of Love

above that sea of human heads, like *Cypris Anadyomone*, Venus rising from the ocean, and at that sight both the judges and the people uttered a simultaneous cry of admiration. The case was won, and whilst the *hetairai* drove Euthias from the *agora* with stones, the people escorted Hyperides home in triumph in a fever of enthusiasm, whilst they sang the praises of Beauty, and were ready to sell their rights as citizens for a single smile from the courtesan. Hyperides, who had vanquished her enemies, and vanquished himself by the splendour of his last argument, carried the woman whom he had just saved home in his arms, naked and shivering, and she proved her gratitude to him by becoming his mistress.

In that celebrated acquittal of Phryne, we ought too see something more than ^{is} generally seen in it. It was not only due to a kind of senile sexual excitement, and to the erotic frenzy of the people, but also to the admiration and respect of an artistic race, bending the knee before the unexpected and sovereign apparition of Beauty. They saw that it was impossible to condemn that woman, whom the gods seemed to have made as the incarnation of the perfection of woman.

They felt that if they were to suppress that wonderful type, painters and sculptors would be deprived of a living ideal, and the feeling that inspired Hyperides with boldness, the judges with clemency and the crowd with enthusiasm, was one of those inspirations which do the greatest honour to the Athenian people.

That surprising sight of Phryne naked, exposed to the general gaze, so struck those intellectual men who were taken with anything that was beautiful, that a short time afterwards the magistrates issued one of the most singular decrees that can possibly be imagined. It said that, considering that the rich alone could have the pleasure of seeing Phryne thus, and since it was, nevertheless, good and salutary to show the people what a beautiful woman was, considering also that the gods would be honoured by the presence of that marvellous body, which they had deigned to create for men, it was decreed that on certain festivals the scene that had taken place before the tribunal of the Heliasts, should be gone through again.

And thus, once a year, Phryne was obliged to go and bathe in the sea, in the presence of all the people. She went into the water covered with

drapery, and she emerged from it, to the frantic applause of the Athenians, no doubt in the pose which Praxiteles gave to his statue, but quite naked, white and glistening, clothed in the pearls of the waves, unfolding under the warm caresses of the sun.

And the people, old and young, rich and poor alike, went away charmed and happy, and as they went they sang a hymn of admiration to the courtesan, which we can still repeat :

“Blessed be Phryne the divine, because she has afforded the dazzling sight of Beauty to the eyes and the hearts of men !”

HELEN OF TROY.

HOMER'S Helen, or the Helen of Offenbach's Opera, *La Belle Hélène*?

It would certainly be more than strange to institute any comparison between those two names, and at first sight it looks as if there could be no comparison between the author of *Les Deux-Avengles**, and the immortal blind Greek poet, and it is quite certain that if one were to question all the people who know the name, nine-tenths of them would reply humming an air of Offenbach's.

Since the appearance of that burlesque, many people have found fault with it. Even at the

* The Two Blind Men.



present time, when it was in a measure become classic, more than one cry has been raised against it, as being a profanation and sacrilege, and such retrospective devotees would easily accuse Meilhac of being a Vandal and Halévy of being an Iconoclast.

“What! Touch Homer? Turn a legend into burlesque! What about respect, confound it? And sacred things? And myths?”

We must, however, remark one thing, and that is, that people who talk most learnedly on this subject, are precisely those who are the poorest and most unrelibable teachers of the subject. Those hot champions of antiquity would be very much embarrassed if one were to put that venerable Greek, which they defend so warmly, like martyrs who die for a religion, without understanding anything at all about it, under their nose.

For any one who knows Greek, and who has read Homer in Homer, and not in Pope, the sacrilege of Halévy and of Meilhac changes its character absolutely. It is not only a charming piece of pleasantry, and an excellent caricature, but is also a manner of interpreting Homer that is not without its value. Evidently those intellectual men

who have thus travestied Homer, know him very well, and have penetrated his inmost meaning, and they discovered the parody by straining the meaning. They have simply crossed the line that separates the sublime from the ridiculous. They were not obliged to use any great effort to make those barbaric heroes ridiculous, whose magniloquence is almost out of place, and who at the same time appeal to human nature by the most common place, vulgar, every day requirements. Achilles and his invulnerable heel, Menelaus and his domestic misfortunes, proud and stupid Agamemnon, Calchas the cheat, and lastly Helen, as we shall see her presently, are all of them too true to nature not to be comical, and Homer himself, who has made them so proud, arrogant and magnificent never omits an opportunity of having a laugh at their expense. All the jokes in second rate French burlesque are respectable compared with the coarse insults which the demi gods fling at each others heads. The string of epithets which they exchange amongst themselves must be read in the original Greek, such as hog dog, having the eyes of a dog, but the heart of a deer, fox, wine skin, and many others and we require to picture them to

ourselves eating whole oxen, which they roast entire, whilst they drink in proportion, and threaten each other with their fists. We must take into account the contempt that Achilles felt for Agamemnon, the folly and nonsense of Menelaus, and Ajax's boasting. And when we have thoroughly got to the foundation of the Homeric idea, it will be time to stop crying, *Shame!* because men of genius have stripped these living beings of the wrappers, only suitable for mummies, with which pedants have covered their nakedness. To speak the truth, such a parody appears to come far nearer the truth than many learned commentaries, which, moreover, have the disadvantage of being very tiresome.

If, however, there be any sacrilege in the matter, the blame must not be laid upon modern times, for the Trojan legend has furnished subjects for laughter for a long period. The Romans, and even the Greeks, who, however, had not the same excuse as we have of belonging to a religion which was altogether unknown to Homer, made as much fun of the divine bard as we do. Without mentioning the innumerable poems that have been lost, the very titles of which the ancient grammarians have barely preserved

for us, it is enough to read Lucian, Ovid or Martial to see that men did not trouble themselves about their heroes. Andromache herself, who was in every way such a noble and touching character, was not respected by the scoffers of antiquity. Why then accuse modern scoffers?

At bottom, however, both ancients and moderns were right. It is allowable to turn the greatest, noblest subjects into ridicule and to parody genius; certainly nobody would ever think of turning the *Francidde* of Monsieur Viennet into ridicule, for that would simply be useless repetition.

Having said this much, and so as not to return to the subject again, the truth is that Helen is one of the most beautiful and splendid figures of an amorous woman that has ever been imagined by a poet. Let us for a moment forget the buffoonish dress in which mockers have often arrayed her, let us banish the lively airs, which Offenbach makes her sing, from our memory, and let us try merely to discover her as she was regarded by antiquity.

Helen is that fatal and sovereign beauty which dominates one of the grandest heroic poems that human intellect ever conceived; she is the

earthly incarnation of the female type, unconscious and terrible beloved woman, unaffected and cruel, whose mere glance seduces men, whilst the unhappy aspirants to her favours rush to battle and to scenes of bloodshed for one glance from her eyes.

Helen is of the number of the most divine amongst that divine array of queens and courtezans whose stars stud the heaven of humanity. She is the same kind of woman as Cleopatra, the latter being an historical, whilst the former is merely a legendary character.

II.

Fair Helen was the daughter of a god. Her mother, who was the wife of Tyndareus, king of Lacedæmon, was Leda, and her father was that celebrated swan of the river Eurotas, who was none other than Jupiter metamorphosed. Such an amour and such an origin could alone explain her marvellous beauty, which did not take long to develop, and to make itself desired. Even at a tender age she was so supernaturally lovely

that men stopped to look at her, and her reputation had already spread throughout the whole of Greece. According to some historians and writers on mythology Plutarch and Hellenius for example the child, even before she was marriageable, inspired such violent passions that she had always to be escorted by guards.

Such precautions such precocious beauty, such renown, inspired heroes with a natural desire to make the acquaintance of this youthful marvel. Theseus, accompanied by his friend Pirithous, thought that such a conquest would not be beneath him, and that it would be well to take the child at once and keep her, so as to possess the woman later.

At that time Helen was only twelve years of age, to accept the most moderate assertions of her biographers, for according to some she was only seven. In any case, she was still a mere child and she was dancing in the temple of Diana with her companions when Theseus saw her, and like all other men who had seen her, he immediately felt love for her. He had come to carry off a child, and he found her a woman already, and he took her away by force and entrusted her to his mother's care in Aphidnæ.

Her brothers, Castor and Pollux, however, would not easily give up such a treasure, and furious because Theseus had carried her off, instead of demanding her in marriage, they took the field. It was in vain that Theseus hid his prey, so that she might not be discovered. Helen was too beautiful to remain unknown anywhere, for the very birds that saw her would have uttered her name at the sight of her loveliness. Some Athenians saw her; Castor and Pollux were told of the fact, they laid siege to Aphidnes, and regained possession of Helen.

Helen, like most women, was as deceitful as she was beautiful, for she repaid her brothers by a lie, swearing to them that Theseus had respected her virtue. It is, however, certain that that hero, who wished to keep that fruit for later use, when he saw that the fruit was eluding his grasp, ate the blossom before hand. When she returned to Lacedæmon with her brothers, Helen stayed with her sister, Clytemnestra, who was the wife of Agamemnon. The birth of Iphegenia, who was the daughter of Theseus and of Helen, coincides with that journey, and as Helen did not wish to take that witness of her shame back to Sparta with her, Clytemnestra made Agamemnon believe

that Iphegenia was his own daughter, and had her brought up at the Court of Argos.

After this first adventure the supervision over Helen became closer, and then, besides, she was becoming more and more beautiful day by day. Her divine body had expanded all its beauties under the influence of the first kisses with which it had been covered, and now she appeared to be an Aphrodite, a living, earthly Venus.

Of course we have no certain *data* or accounts which will allow us to draw an exact portrait of her, but what we do know is sufficient to compose or to picture her form and features for ourselves. She was tall, with a dazzling, white skin, and fair hair. Two characteristic features of her beauty are well-known; the length of her neck, and her perfect bust, and the reason why mythology attributed her birth to the swan was on account of her supple and undulous neck. As regards her bosom, it suffices to remember that she was the first woman whose breasts served as models for those goblets that were consecrated to Venus, and we require nothing more than her bust and her neck with their perfect outlines, than the suppleness of her whole body and the marble-like whiteness of

her skin, to give us an impression of what Helen was like. In addition to this, we need only picture to ourselves large and profound eyes, a voluptuous mouth, and, above all, serene and profound majesty, almost overshadowing all these charming details.

Consequently the whole of Greece soon became enamoured of that lovely woman. All the chiefs, all the kings, all the heroes, had but one object in view: to possess her. They all forgot her escapade with Theseus; they were feign to forget her capricious humours, which no man could satisfy, and her charms, which no one could retain for himself; all that men thought about was the bliss of possessing her.

Tyndareus, Helen's father, found great difficulty in choosing a son-in-law, for if he had selected one of the Greek kings, he would have made all the others his enemies. And then, who could have guaranteed the chosen husband the undisturbed possession of his wife? Would not the discarded lovers league themselves together in order to have their revenge on him? He, therefore, told all her suitors of the embarrassment he was in, and with their aid tried to discover the best way out of the difficulty.

Paris, the tediousness of her peaceful, every-day life, and the will of Venus? So she yielded and allowed herself to be carried off by the young Trojan, and Paris possessed Helen for the first time in the island of Cranae

Now the time had come to remind her former suitors of their solemn oath. The rights of Menelaus had been infringed, and, moreover, it was a foreigner, an Asiatic, who had carried off the most beautiful woman in Greece. In the name of insulted Greece, of Menelaus, who had been betrayed, and on account of the oath which they had taken, the offence must be punished and the kings must form a league to do so. Some of them thought it very hard that they should be obliged to keep their promise, and to go and fight for a woman who was nothing to them, but they could not draw back, they had sworn and they must keep their oaths, and thus the Trojan war was decided on.

It was a gigantic war, which has lived in legend, thanks to the wonderful Greek Epic of Homer, where Greece and Asia, heroes and barbarians, met. There two nations came into collision, who were to meet again later at Marathon and Salamis. All the Greek chiefs had come, Agamemenon, the

commander-in-chief of the Greek forces, Menelaus, king of Sparta, swift-footed Achilles, Ajax, the son of Telamon, the bulwark of the Greeks, Nestor, renowned for his wisdom, eloquence, and honied words, who had lived through three generations of men, crafty Ulysses, who was so dear to Minerva, Ajax; the son of Oileus, and Idomeneus and finally the whole flower of kings and princes. On the Trojan side, the fifty sons of Priam called the shepherd-kings from the mountains to their aid, as well as the chiefs from the plains, and all the country had taken refuge with them in the citadel of Ilium. Amongst those heroes we may remark Æneas, the son of Anchises and of Venus, Paris, who abducted Helen, and above all Hector, the great warrior, who alone was able to resist god-like Achilles, Hector, who made the whole Greek army retreat at the sound of his voice.

The terrible struggle began, and continued for ten whole years, and thousands of men were massacred and heroes died for the sake of that fair woman, who had been ravished from her husband's arms. The gods themselves took part in that interminable war, for from time to time, when both sides were tired, and seemed to want a little repose, or when one of the two were ready

busied in polishing his breast-plate, far from the scene of battle, she heaped insults upon him, calling him a child, lazy, with a heart of wax and the soul of a child, and she tried to make him go and fight. Should he not always be in the foremost rank, for the sake of whose love she had consented to every disgrace, he who alone had tasted all the delights of that voluptuous pleasure for which two nations were killing each other?

And Paris really went into battle, but he was soon overcome by fatigue, and Aphrodite carried him off in a cloud, and deposited him in Helen's chamber to rest.

"Coward!" great-hearted Helen said to him. "You have left the battle. Would to heaven that you had died there, killed by that brave man who was my first husband. Formerly you certainly used to boast that you surpassed valiant Menelaus in spirit, in the strength of your arms and the power to wield the lance. Go and challenge him, go and single out gallant Menelaus, so that he may fight with you once more. Go! But no! I advise you to keep quiet, and not to attack yellow-haired Menelaus, not to fight with him, as if you were a fool, for fear lest he should kill you with a thrust from his lance!"

But Paris knew his power, and that Aphrodite was protecting him, and so he closed Helen's lips with a kiss.

"Do not fly out at me in painful reproaches," he said. "For if Menelaus succeeds in overcoming me, it will be by the help of Pallas Athene, and I shall overcome him in my turn, for we have also some of the gods on our side. But come, let us rejoice in love, and let us go to bed together. For never before has love laid such a hold upon my heart, not even, when after carrying you off from your dear Lacedæman, I sailed with you in my ships, and when in the island of Cranae I fell upon you with that love which joined our bodies. I love you as much to-day as I did the first time, and sweet desire has seized me."

And he drew Helen, who was conquered, on to the amorous couch.

Thus, although she was greater than her lover, yet yielding to all powerful Venus, Helen could not think of returning to the camp of the Greeks, and so the war continued. When would it end? When Paris was killed it seemed as if everything were ended by that death, but it was not the question of one man, for an entire nation possessed

Helen, as it could constantly see her, and had the unspeakable happiness of enjoying that sight. Helen was married to Deiphobus, a brother of Paris, and the war continued

But this time, although she had yielded to the will of Venus, Helen was less weak than she had been with Paris, for she had loved him, and she did not love Deiphobus, and so she found herself thinking of the Greeks, of Sparta and of the river Eurotas more frequently. Besides, ten years had passed by, and her adventurous mind now dwelt with pleasure on the hope of peaceful, family life, and a respected home, she thought longingly of happiness, of regaining her old, dear domestic hearth, and time had done more to draw her closer to Menelaus than all the gigantic battles of the siege

Consequently, when Menelaus found means to enter Troy, disguised as a begger, and told her of the decisive blow that was to put an end to the war, she received him with joy. She alone was in the secret of the pretended departure of the Greeks, and of the famous wooden horse, which was admitted into the town, and placed in the temple Pallas (Minerva) by the Trojans. She knew that that horse contained in it the ruin of

Troy. She could have made the design miscarry, and perhaps the recollection of the sons of Priam, who had been killed for her, may have reproached her for not assisting the Trojans to conquer, for it was an act of ingratitude not to save them. But then, on the other hand, she was a Greek, she wished to see her country, that she had forsaken, again, and she preferred the ruin of those who had taken her to the ruin of those who were going to regain possession of her. But in order to make trial of her skill, and to frighten prudent Ulysses, she went into the temple at night, and standing under the horse's belly, she imitated the voices of the wives of the chiefs, whom they had left in Greece. Anticlos was so thoroughly deceived that, unable to resist the desire of replying, he was about to speak, when Ulysses squeezed his throat to make him be silent. With the exception of that species of boyish trick, which is out of place when we know Helen's calmness, nothing interfered with the trick of the Greeks, and the next day Troy was taken and burnt. Priam was killed by Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, and Deiphobus by Menelaus, and at last the Greeks had regained possession of that beautiful woman, who had

been the cause of so much bloodshed. She returned in triumph, she did not go to Greece as a captive, as Hecuba, Cassandra and Andromache did but she returned as a queen, received with delight by her husband and by the acclamations of the whole of Greece, and when some time later Telemachus came to Sparta on his journey in search of his father, he found Helen happy and respected.

She was mistress of the palace, and poured him out that wine which appeases anger, drives away trouble and makes men forget all their ills. No doubt Menelaus and all the Greeks had drunk some of that wine for nobody ever reproached Helen for her faults and the numbers of men whom her whim had sent to Hades.

But an unhappy end awaited the most beautiful of women. After the death of Menelaus and his contemporaries in the Trojan war were dead, Helen still survived and no doubt she was less beautiful than formerly. Time must have deprived her divine face and body of those charms which had formerly intoxicated and blinded men and so the two natural sons of Menelaus, Megapenthes and Nicostratus, drove Helen from her husband's palace. She was

obliged to flee, and this time not to follow her roving lover, but to escape death, and she took refuge in the island of Rhodes. But there Polyxo, the wife of Tlepolemus, who was one of the heroes who had been killed at the siege of Troy, was reigning, and she hated Helen. Consequently, one day when she was in her bath, the widow of Tlepolemus sent women disguised as Furies, with instructions to kill the woman who had been the cause of the death of the hero, who hanged her on a tree.* Thus that beautiful woman payed the penalty for all the ills that she had caused, that she had made others suffer.

It was a terrible punishment, the most cruel that could be imagined! Helen, beautiful Helen, the wonder of the world, the image of god-like beauty, Helen was hanged.

But posterity did not ratify that implacable judgement. It, like the Greeks during the siege, remained dazzled by Helen's beauty, and in every direction, and even in Rhodes, temples were erected to her, as if she had been a goddess. And posterity was right, for Helen was the incarnation love and of beauty, and her love was, moreover,

*The accounts of Helen's death vary very

fatal. It was the will of Aphrodite that guided her, and nobody can resist the gods. The last word to be said about Helen is that of the old men at the Sæcan gate:—

“No! it is not your fault if men die for you. And even if it were your fault, men would be right if they were to kill themselves for such a beautiful woman.”

DELILAH.



THE following is, according to the Bible, the story of Samson and Delilah.

As the children of Israel had offended the Lord, He had delivered them up into the hands of the Philistines for forty years, and they were in a most distressing state of slavery. At that time there was a man of the tribe of Dan, named Manoah, living at Torah, whose wife was barren, and the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her:—

“Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. Now, therefore, beware I pray thee, and drink not wine

nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. For, lo! thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and no razor shall come on his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb, and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines

Then the woman came and told her husband, saying —

“A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible but I asked him not whence he was neither told he me his name

“But he said unto me “‘Behold thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and now drink no wine nor strong drink neither eat any unclean thing, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death’”

Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said —

“Oh! my Lord, let the man of God, which thou didst send, come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born”

And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of the Lord came again unto the woman as she sat in the field, but Manoah, her husband, was not with her And the woman made

haste, and ran and showed her husband, and said unto him :—

“ Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.” (Judges XIII, 3—10.)

So Manoah followed her, and came to the man, and asked him whether it was he who had spoken to his wife, and receiving a reply in the affirmative he asked him how they should order the child, and how they should do unto him, and the angel told him that he must drink no wine, nor even eat anything that came of the vine, nor any unclean thing. So Manoah was satisfied, and asked the angel whether he should get a kid ready for him, but the stranger replied that he could not eat of their food, but that he should offer it up as a burnt offering to the Lord, for Manoah did not know that he was an angel of the Lord. But he asked him what his name was, and was told that it was secret, or wonderful. So Manoah took a kid and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord, and as the flame rose to the sky, the man of God went up to heaven in the flame of the altar, at which Manoah and his wife fell on their faces to the ground in fear, and Manoah said unto his wife :—

"We shall surely die, because we have seen God," she, however, reassured him, and in due time she bare a son, and they called his name Samson

He grew continually stronger, and the Lord blessed his youth, and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Torah and Eshtaol, and one day, as he was going down to Timnath, he saw a beautiful girl among the daughters of the Philistines, and on his return home, he begged them to obtain her for him for wife, but they said that there were beautiful girls amongst the daughters of Israel, so why should he wish for a wife from amongst the Philistines, who were their oppressors and uncircumcised but as he persisted in wanting her, they went with him to Timnath, and asked for her in marriage for him, and as they went, a young lion came out of a vineyard and roared against him, but Samson rent him as easily as he would have rent a kid, but his father and mother did not notice anything, and he did not tell them what had happened

A few days later, when they were all returning to conclude the marriage, Samson turned out of the way a little to look at the lion's carcase, when

he found that there was a swarm of bees and honey in it, and Samson took it and ate some himself and gave some to his father and mother.

The marriage was soon arranged, and according to custom, a great feast was prepared. The citizens of Timnath had given Samson an escort of thirty young men, to do honour to him, and during the meal Samson proposed a riddle to them, and said that if they could find out the answer within seven days, he would give them thirty shirts and thirty changes of garments, but if not, they should give him the same; and they told him to put forth his riddle, which was :—

“ Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

As they had not found out the riddle in three days, on the seventh day they said to his wife that unless she could find the answer out for them they would burn her and her father's house. So his wife wept before him, and begged him to tell her, during seven days, until he told her, tired out by her tears and reproaches, and she immediately told the secret to her fellow citizens, and that evening, before sunset, the young men said to Samson :—

vengeance, and then he guessed that the Philistines intended to kill him. Then the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords on his arms became as burnt flax. He saw a jaw-bone of an ass close to him, and seizing it, he killed a thousand men with it; and then, throwing it away, he called the name of the place Ramath-Lehi, that is, the lifting up of the jaw-bone. Then being very thirsty, he called on the Lord, so that he might not fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, and God caused a spring of water to spring from the jaw,* and so Samson was saved.

This victory and miracle clearly indicated that God recognised and designated Samson as his elect instrument, and so the people of Israel appointed him as their judge. During the twenty years that he exercised that office, Samson continued to be the terror of the the Philistines, who no longer ventured to oppress Israel now that it was commanded by the chosen of the Lord. But perfidious men were plotting all kinds of devices

*Beyond all question, the right translation is the hollow horn. It is evidently a hollow or basin in its shape, was called burst out in Samson's thirst" (The Speaker's

to get the better of the man, whom they could not overcome openly, and once they very nearly succeeded in taking him at a moment when they hoped that the Spirit of God would not be upon him.

He had gone to Gaza, where he had seen a beautiful woman, who was a courtesan by occupation, and he went to spend the night with her. The news quickly spread all through the city, and they made sure of catching him; so they surrounded the house, and laid wait at the gate of the city, and hoped to kill him in the morning.

But Samson, either having learnt their design, or being inspired by the Spirit of God, got up in the middle of the night, and left the house in silence. Then going to the gate without waking the guards, without noise or effort he took off the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and putting everything on to his shoulders, he carried it all to the top of the hill overlooking Hebron, and thus the Philistines were disappointed in their attempt, and once more Samson avoided their snares.

II.

Such was the man who saved Israel, who prepared the way for the kings who was endowed with miraculous force from God, whom no one could overcome and who was, nevertheless, in the end to be overcome by a woman

We have already seen how Samson was in love with a courtesan in GAZA and again it was to be a courtesan who caught him in her toils, but not for one night only this time, for she was to play the same part towards him that Greek mythology makes Omphale play towards Hercules. She knew how to tame the hero, to subjugate him altogether to her charms and he, who was invincible loved her well enough to confide in her the secret of his strength, that is to say, of his life and of his glory

Her name was Delilah, and she lived in the valley of Sorek

It may seem strange at first sight thus to see a man who had been dedicated to God from his birth, a Nazarite, a judge of Israel, commit himself with courtezans, and seek for pleasures which are supposed to be forbidden even to the common herd of the faithful; but that is an erroneous opinion, and the fact has nothing unnatural about it to anyone who reflects on Oriental morals.

Asia is not only the cradle of the human race, but also the cradle of prostitution; courtezans first of all practised their calling in that ardent climate, under the heat of that intoxicating sky, and there they carried it to perfection. There is a wide chasm between our Western prostitution, which hides itself, which is hypocritical, and which our morals and our customs barely tolerate, and Eastern prostitution, where it shows itself in broad daylight, altogether ignoring shame, and forming an integral part of the public customs and morality. Whilst with us the courtesan is looked upon as an inferior and degraded being, in the East she was for a long time regarded as a kind of priestess of sensual pleasure. She had her place even in the constitution of the family, as is proved by the thoroughly Asiatic custom of

the harem. It would be a great mistake to see nothing in it but a merely depraved invention, a refinement for rich voluptuaries, an infamous form of slavery. The seraglio has a patriarchal origin, and very possibly we ought to look upon it as the primitive form of a family. The patriarch, the father of the nomad family, did not attain to wealth, prosperity and power, except by increasing the number of his children. The more children he had the more hands he possessed for working or fighting, and thence arose the necessity for having several wives, just as amongst animals we see a single male suffice for a whole herd of females. That was the origin of the seraglio, and in the seraglio courtezans were formed, and to that almost sacred character we must attribute the religious character which prostitution possessed amongst certain nations. The Assyrians and the Babylonians afford the greatest examples of that belief, which seems so monstrous to us.

The Jews, an Asiatic race, who had sprung from patriarchal families, must have been fully prepared for those morals. The idea of one only God prevented them from erecting sensuality into a religion and raising the prostitute to the

status of a priestess; but they none the less preserved the want of ~~and the~~ love and almost the respect for courtezans.

We need only dip into their history to become convinced that they felt no repugnance at loving girls who made merchandize of their bodies. They, who made it a principle not to mix with strange nations, did not disdain to touch the daughters of those nations, and it was no uncommon thing to see Ethiopian, Moabilish or Canaanilish women become the mistresses and even the wives of circumcised Jews. Moses, their great legislator, who would have been the first to condemn prostitution if he had thought that it ought to be condemned, had an Ethiopian mistress during their wanderings in the desert, and later, after Samson, Jephtha, the son of Gilead, was the son of a harlot. (Judges, XI, 1.) We have seen Samson marry the daughter of a Philistine first of all, and then go and spend the night with a courtezan at Gaza. The sacred books, which mention these facts, have not a word of blame for the hero's pranks, any more than Greek mythology has for Jupiter's; for the nations, which at a later period saw Solomon surrounded by a harem of a thousand women,

could not have been astonished at seeing Samson fond of courtezans, and so Samson loved Delilah, a girl from the valley of Zorah, a Philistine and a courtesan

She was one of those fair, or rather red haired women, who are so common in Syria, like Mary Magdalen was later, and like one still sees in Turkish harems and in Oriental market places. Those women unite golden hair to a dull, amber-coloured skin, which is a rare and very strange contrast, well calculated to excite desire. With all the slimness of the Syrian women, they are not so thin and their ample forms remind us of our Northern beauties. An Arab poet has compared them to a mare of the desert, who has spent the winter in a stable in Bagdad. She has retained her sinewy legs, her good shoulders and her graceful neck, but her crupper and her chest are firmer and rounder. And this was the case with Delilah.

We can easily imagine to ourselves the rich courtesan's house, to which the principal Jews and Philistines, merchants and caravan contractors brought their gains and their booty. No doubt she gloried in allowing herself to be loved, and remained motionless and perfectly calm

amidst their caresses. They themselves loved after the fashion of Orientals, sluggishly, without any ardour, and only took their money's worth. They knew, as all their wise men said, that women are impure and bad, that one must enjoy her like one does some beautiful fruit, but that one must not give her one's heart, if one wishes to preserve one's reason. And thus all were satisfied and tranquil, because they did not ask the female for more than she could give.

But she was not happy amidst all this wealth and this assured sway. The secret desire of every woman is to be loved so as to make the man who loves her suffer, and to possess a fortress at her feet, which she can make weak; what she wants in love is a kind of strife, from which she shall emerge victorious.

And the more beautiful and intellectual, and the more thorough courtesan such a woman is, the higher she will aim. It seems ridiculous to her to subjugate an ordinary man. What does such and such a vulgar adorer signify? He is not worth the trouble of trying to make yourself beloved by him. But a man who rules others by strength or genius, a hero, an artist, or a king, that is the man whom it is pleasant to see suffering

In Samson, the conqueror of the Philistines and the Nazarite, Delilah found that wonderful fortress, and Samson loved Delilah enough to die for her.

III.

When the lords of the Philistines saw the hero thus in subjection to a woman, they thought that they would soon get the better of him, if they could get her over to their side. And that was not a difficult matter.

She came of the Philistine race, whose pride and tyranny Samson had lowered and defeated. And then, she was a woman; that is to say, she would naturally wish to discover her lover's secret, and would be ready to betray him when she had discovered it.

So the lords of the Philistines went to her and said:

"Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him, and we will give thee, every one

of us, eleven hundred pieces of silver."* She listened to their propositions, and as Samson satisfied all her whims, she thought that she should quickly succeed in what she wished, and so one evening, whilst she was sitting on his knees and stroking his face,† she said to him:—

"Do you not continually say that you can refuse me nothing?"

"You know that I do all I can to please you."

"There is one thing, however, as you know, that I want to find out, and which you will not tell me."

"If I know it, and it be possible for me to tell you, I will. What is it?"

"Tell me the secret of your strength, and how it is that there is nothing strong enough to bind you."

Samson remembered how his first wife had betrayed the secret of his riddle, and whether he wished to try Delilah, or whether he was already sure of her treachery, and wished to avoid it, he told her a lie, and said:—

"If they bind me with seven green withys, that

* About £490 altogether. (Translator.)

† It will be noticed that the author has not, by any means, adhered strictly to the Biblical narrative. (Translator.)

were never dried, then shall I be weak and be as another man " (Judges, XVI, 7)

So she bound him as he had said, after hiding a number of men in the house, and then said —

"The Philistines be upon thee, Samson"

"But when they came in, he broke the withys, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire " (v 9)

Like all women who are caught in a fault, Delilah, instead of begging his pardon, got angry, and like all men who are too much in love, Samson endured her anger, without reproaching her for her fault, but she said —

"Behold thou has mocked me and told me lies, now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound "

• "You see that I was right not to trust you, as you were ready to betray me "

"I betrayed you because I knew that you were lying, I should not have done so, if you had told me the truth Tell me, and you will see "

"Very well!" Samson replied, "if they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak and as another man " (v 11)

And she bound him as he had said, after again hiding the Philistines in the house. But as

soon as they appeared, the same thing happened as before, for the ropes broke like thread, and they did not yet know the secret of his strength.

Then Delilah got angry and declared that he had never loved her, and that he had only mocked her hitherto, and, as patient as a cat on the watch for a mouse, asked him for the third time to tell her the wonderful secret, and Samson replied:—

“If thou weavest the seven locks of my hair with the web.”

Then she wove those long plaits as a woof into the threads of a warp, which stood prepared on a loom in the chamber, which Delilah fastened down with a pin, so as to keep it firm and immovable, for she believed what he said.

But when the Philistines came in, Samson woke up, and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web, and so they did not yet know the secret of his strength.

At that fresh defeat, Delilah felt that if she continually allowed herself to be deceived, her power over her lover would be altogether lost, and she reproached him with not loving her and with making fun of her, and she never left him at peace, but pressed him daily with her words and

urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, and he told her all his heart and said unto her —

“ There hath not come a razor upon mine head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb, if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak and be like other men ” (Judges XVI, 17)

Then “ Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart . and she made him sleep upon her knees, and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head and his strength went from him And she said — ‘ The Philistines be upon thee, Samson ’ . — And he wist not that the Lord had departed from him ’ Then “ the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison house ” (Judges XVI, 20 27)

Some little time afterwards ‘ the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon, their god, and to rejoice, and they met in the temple, the roof of which was covered by about three thousand men and women, and from time to time they sung the praises of Delilah, made fun of Samson, and

chanted triumphal hymns." And when their hearts were merry they said :—

"Call for Samson that he may make us sport."

And they called for Samson out of the prison house, and he made them sport ; and they set him between the pillars, whilst he was received with shouts of laughter. They could make fun of the hero now that he had lost his strength and was in chains.

And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand :—

"Suffer me, that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them."

Then, after praying for a return of his strength, he took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, one with his right hand, and the other with his left, and he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it, so that the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

The next day his brethren and all his family came and bewailed the great Nazarite, who had judged Israel for twenty years, and he was buried in the burying-place of Manoah, his father, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

JUDITH.

A RPHAXAD, King of the Medes, having subjugated many nations, and built a large and strong city, called Ecbatana, Nabuchodonosor declared war against him. A great battle was fought at a place called Ragau, between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and Arphaxad was defeated. Then King Nabuchodonosor was more inflated with pride than ever, and he sent and summoned all the nations to submit to him. His heralds went to Cilicia, to Damascus, to Libanus and Antilibanus, to Carmel and to Galaad, to Galilee and the plain of Esdrelom, to Samaria and beyond Jordan, unto Jerusalem and Betane,

and Chellus and Hades, and as far as Ethiopia. But the inhabitants of the plain of Jordan made light of his commands, and sent away his ambassadors in disgrace, for they would not recognise his authority. Then Nabuchodonosor was very angry, and swore by his throne and kingdom that he would be avenged upon them for their insolence.

So war was decided upon in the eighteenth year of his reign, and the King summoned all his officers and nobles and told them of his plan, and they were pleased with it. Then he summoned Holophemes, the chief captain of his army, and told him to take a hundred thousand foot soldiers and twelve thousand cavalry and to go against the West country, and especially against those who had despised his ambassadors; he was to spare none that continued rebellious.

Then Holophemes mustered his army of a hundred and thirty-two thousand men, which was well victualled, and the mighty host, with its camp-followers and oxen and sheep, covered the face of the earth to the Westward.

When he had got beyond the limits of Assyria, Holophemes was victorious everywhere, and he encamped opposite Bectileth, near Mount Agáne,

where the fortresses opened their gates to him. He took the city of Meloth by storm, and spoiled the children of Rasses and of Ishmael, who lived in the direction of the desert, to the west of Cellon. He then crossed the Euphrates and entered Mesopotamia, and destroyed all the strong cities as far as the sea. Then he took possession of their frontiers from Cilicia as far as the borders of Japheth to the East, and went round Midian, and burned their tents and took their cattle and next he descended into the plain of Damascus at harvest time and burnt their corn, their trees and their vines, and the terror of his name spread through the whole country.

So they sent ambassadors to him to treat for peace, who said that everything they had belonged to him, that they and their children were his slaves, to treat as he pleased.

Then he descended from the mountains and took possession of the country, and took their picked soldiers to increase the number of his army. And from all the cities, and from the country round, they came to meet him with garlands and dances and timbrels. But it was all in vain, for by Nabuchodonosor's orders he destroyed their high places, or temples, and cut down their sacred

groves, "for he had decreed to destroy all the gods of the land, that all nations should worship Nabuchodonosor only, and call upon him as a god." (Judith III, 8.) Thus he went through the whole of Syria, Mesopotamia and Idumæa, and encamped between Geba and Scythopolis, and there he stayed a whole month, to collect all the baggage of his army.

When they heard all this, the children of Israel, who lived in Judæa, were very much afraid, and trembled to think of what he might do to Jerusalem and to the temple of the Lord. So they took possession of the tops of the hills, fortified the villages and laid in stores of corn, for it was just after the harvest, and Joacim, the high priest, wrote to the inhabitants of Bethulia and to those who lived near Esdraelon, which was towards the open country, near Dothaim, and told them to hold all the defiles which might open the way to Jerusalem. The children of Israel did as the high priest told them, and "cried to God with great fervency, and humbled themselves, they and their wives and their children, and put sackcloth upon their loins. And the priest put on sackcloth, and strewed ashes on their heads, and covered the altar with sackcloth, and cried to God n

them up as a prey to their enemies and their wives for a spoil, and the cities of their inheritance to destruction, and the sanctuary to profanation and reproach, and for the nations to rejoice at." (Judith IV, 12.)

Then it was told Holophemes that the children of Israel were holding the defiles of the mountains and preparing to resist, at which he was very angry, and he sent for the princes of Moab and the captains of Ammon and asked them who that people was which were occupying the mountains; what their cities were and whether they were numerous. He also asked whether they were brave and numerous, and why they had determined to come and meet him, more than the inhabitants of the West.

Then Achior, the captain of the sons of Ammon, replied:—

"If you will deign to listen to me, I will tell you the truth, and no lie shall come out of my mouth. This people are descended from the Chaldeans, and worship one and only God, who ordered them to leave Mesopotamia and to go and live in the land of Charan. When a famine covered all the land of Canaan, they went down into Egypt and sojourned there, and increased so

that they could not be numbered. As the king of Egypt overwhelmed them with work, made them build his cities and persecuted them, they cried to their God, who struck Egypt with divers plagues, and as the Egyptians had sent them away, and wished to enslave them again as soon as the plagues had ceased, their God dried the Red Sea before them and destroyed the Egyptians in the waters. After they had crossed the sea dry-shod, they wandered in the desert, where no human being had ever lived, for forty years, because God miraculously provided them with water, and with manna and quails. And wherever they went, God enabled them to cast out their enemies before them, and to defeat the kings of the Canaanites, the Jebuzites, the Perezites, the Sychemites and the Gergesites. Only when they should cease to be faithful to the commandments of their God, could they be conquered. Now, therefore, my lord and governor, try and find out whether they have offended their God, for in that case it will be their ruin, but if they have not done so, it is useless to fight against them, for their God will be with them, and He is always victorious, and 'then we shall become a reproach before all the world.' "

Thus spoke Achior, and the Assyrian leaders and the people near the tent murmured, and said he ought to be put to death, for they said they were not afraid of any of the children of Israel, as they would be powerless against a great army. Thus every nation will know that Nabuchodonosor is God upon earth, and that there is no other beside him.

Then Holophemes, addressing Achior violently, said to him —

“As you have prophesied that the Israelites will be defended by their God, I will show you that there is no other God than Nabuchodonosor. From this moment I look upon you as an enemy, and I intend you to be punished for your impiety, at the same time as they are punished for their insolence. When I have taken vengeance on them, as if they were one man, then you also shall be destroyed with them.”

And Holophemes commanded his servants to seize Achior and to take him to Bethulia, and to deliver him up into the hands of the children of Israel, but when the men of that city saw them, they took up their weapons, and every man that used a sling kept them from coming up by casting stones at them. They, therefore, bound Achior

and threw him down, and left him at the foot of the hill, and returned to the camp.

When the Israelites saw this, they came down from Bethulia, and going up to him, they unbound him and brought him into the city, and took him to the governors, who were, Ozias, Chabris and Charmis, and Achior told them what he had said to Holophemes, and what the latter had boasted that he should do to the Israelites.

When he had related everything that had happened, all the people prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground and worshipped God, and cried unto Him, saying:—"O Lord God of heaven, behold their pride, and pity the low estate of our nation, and look upon the face of those that are sanctified unto Thee this day."

And they comforted Achior and praised him greatly; and Ozias closed the council, and took Achior to his house, and broke the fast by a feast in his honour, and then all the people were summoned to spend the night in the temple, to implore God's help.

The next day, however, Holophemes commanded his troops to attack Bethulia. With the levies that he had raised in the conquered countries, he had altogether a hundred and twenty thousand

foot and twenty-two thousand horse, besides camp followers, and when the children saw that host, they prostrated themselves and put ashes on their heads and prayed to God to have mercy on them. Then, grasping their weapons, they posted themselves at every dangerous spot, and watched day and night.

When Holophemes had surrounded the city, he saw that it was well supplied with water; he took them and set soldiers over them and cut off the supply; but there still remained near the walls some springs to which they might come by night, but the sons of Ammon and of Moab said to him:

"The children of Israel do not trust to their weapons for their defence, but to the steep position of their town, where they hope to be able to defend themselves for a long time. Do not, therefore, fight against them, but remain in camp, and gain possession of the fountain of water that issues forth at the foot of the mountain, and to prevent themselves from dying of thirst they will be bound to surrender."

Those words pleased Holophemes, and he ordered that each fountain should be guarded by a hundred men. On the twentieth day the cisterns in the town were empty, and there was

no more water to be hoped for, and Holophernes anxiously waited for their submission and the moment for his revenge.

Then, however, all the people, men, women and even little children, went to Ozias and said to him unanimously:—

“God be judge between us and you, for you have done us a great injury by not sending a message of peace to the Assyrians, and on that account God will deliver us into their hands. And certainly there is no one who can help us, whilst we are suffering the pangs of thirst, which will destroy us. And now, call together all the people, and let us surrender to Holophernes of our own accord, for it is better to live to praise the Lord than to see your wives and children die. We take heaven and earth to witness against you; and we take the God of our forefathers, who, no doubt, wishes to punish us for our sins, to witness that we wish to be surrendered to Holophernes. If we are to die, let our end be swift by the sword, for that will be better than a lingering death from thirst.”

When they had said that, great lamentation and weeping arose in the temple, and for hours they

"We have sinned with our forefathers, we have been unjust. Have pity on us, and do not forsake us, for we trust in Thee. Do not deliver us up into the hands of a people who will not acknowledge Thee, lest they say — Where is now their God?"

When they tired with crying out, and there was silence, Ozias arose, and amidst his tears he said to them —

"Brethren, be of good courage, let us yet endure five days in the which space the Lord our God may turn toward us, for he will not forsake us utterly. And if these days pass, and there come no help unto us, I will do according to your word."

Those words were heard by Judith, who was the daughter of Merari, the son of Ox, the son of Joseph, the son of Oziel, the son of Elcia, the son of Ananias, the son of Gedeon, the son of Raphaim, the son of Acitho, the son of Ehu, the son of Eliah, the son of Nathanel, the son of Samael, the son of Salsadu, the son of Israel.

And Manasses was her husband, of her tribe and kindred, who died in the barley harvest, so that now she was a widow. He died in Bethulia, his city, and was buried in the tomb of his

fathers, and she had been a widow for three years and four months. In the upper part of her house she made a secret bed-chamber, in which she tarried, shut up with her maids, and put sackcloth on her loins, and wore her widow's apparel, and she fasted all the days of her widowhood, except the eves of the Sabbaths and the Sabbaths, and the eves of the new moons and the new moons, and the feasts and solemn days of the house of Israel, and she was very beautiful.

Her husband had left her great wealth, a large house, cattle and lands, gold and silver, and men-servants and maid-servants.

When she heard Ozias say that he would give up the city in five days, she sent for him and for Chabris and Charmis, the priests, and they all three came to her, and she said to them :—

“What is the meaning of the words of Ozias, that he will give up the city unless within these days the Lord turn to help you? And who are you that have tempted God this day? Such words are not likely to obtain his pity, but to excite his wrath. Have you dared to assign a day for God to show pity on you, and to constitute yourselves judges of what is right? But God is patient, and just as He will not allow Him-

self to be terrified by your threats, as if He were a man, so He will not be angry, like a man would. Let us humble ourselves, and speak to Him as slaves and beg of Him, with tears, to do His will, and wait for His consolation. Let us also show an example to our brethren, for the Lord scourges them that come unto Him, to admonish them."

Ozias and the priests replied to her —

'All that you have said is true, and we have no fault to find with it. but now, pray for us as you are a godly woman and the Lord will send us rain to fill our cisterns and we shall taint no more

And Judith replied —

'I have spoken as best I could and you acknowledge that my words come from God. Therefore approve of what I have determined to do if my plan comes from God, and pray that my will may be strengthened. Keep near the gate to night and I will go out with my maid but I do not wish you to ask me what I am going to do and until I return to you with a reply, I do not wish you to do anything except to pray to God for me

And Ozias and the princes said to her —

“Go in peace, and may God be with you, to avenge us of our enemies.”

And without asking her any more questions they went away, and left her in her private tent on the roof, and there she put ashes on her head and fresh sackcloth, and prostrated herself before the Lord and said :—

“O Lord God of my father, Simeon, to whom Thou gavest a sword to take vengeance of the strangers who had loosened the girdle of a maid to defile her, and made bare her thigh unto shame, O Lord God, who gavest the wives and daughters of the strangers as a spoil, help me, a widow. All Thy ways are prepared, and Thy judgments are in Thy fore knowledge. Regard the camp of the Assyrians, look upon it as Thou didst that of the Egyptians, when they pursued Thy people and trusted to their chariots and horses and to the number of their warriors, but they were all overthrown and destroyed by Thee. May the Assyrians, who are proud of their numbers, of their chariots, of their shields, of their arrows and of their spears, and who do not know that Thou art our God, and that Thy name is Lord and Master, perish in the same way. Raise Thine arm and break their might May

their courage vanish before Thy wrath, for they have purposed to violate Thy sanctuary, to pollute Thy tabernacle, and to cast down with the sword the horns of Thy altar. Behold their pride, and send Thy wrath upon their heads, and strike them through the lips of my love, and give me constancy to despise the enemy and courage to kill him. I put my trust in Thee, put Thy words into my mouth, and Thy strength into my arm, so that Thy house may be sanctified, and all nations may know that Thou art God, and that there is none other than Thee."

After she had ceased to cry unto the Lord, she rose from where she had prostrated herself, and calling her servant, she went down into the house, where she took off her sackcloth and the garments of her widerhood, and washed her body all over with water, and annointed herself, and braided her hair and put a turban on it. Then she put sandals on her feet, and put rings on her fingers, and adorned herself with bracelets and chains and earrings, and afterwards she assumed her festal garments, and after giving her maid a bottle of wine, a cruse of oil, parched corn, figs and some fine bread, they went to the gate, where they found Ozias, Chabris and Chamis waiting for her,

who were surprised at her beauty and said to her:—

“The God of our fathers give thee favour, and accomplish thine enterprizes to the glory of the children of Israel, and to the exaltation of Jerusalem.”

Then they worshipped God.

And Judith, praying to the Lord, went out of the gate with her servant, and as they went down the hill, the Assyrian outposts met them and made them prisoners and said:—

“Where do you come from, and where are you going to?”

“I am a woman of the Hebrews,” she replied, “and I have fled from them, for they will be given over to you as your prey. I am going to Holophernes to tell him how he can take the city without losing a single soldier.”

When they heard her words and saw how beautiful she was, they said to her:—

“You have saved your life by coming down to our master; and now come to his tent, and when you stand before him do not be afraid, but tell him all, and he will treat you well.”

And they took her to the camp, where all wondered at her beauty, and said to one another:—

"Who would despise this people, that have such women among them "

And they that lay near Holophemes went out and all his servants, and they brought her into the tent, where Holophemes was resting on his couch within the mosquito curtain. He was surprised at her wonderful beauty and said —

"Who would despise the Jews, since they have such beautiful women? Is it not right that we should go to war with them, to capture such booty? "

As soon as Judith saw Holophemes on his bed covered with purple and adorned with precious stones, she prostrated herself before him with her face to the ground, as if struck by his grandeur, but he made a sign to his servants who raised her up, and as soon as she was standing before him, Holophemes said to her —

"Woman, fear not, for I never hurt any that was willing to serve Nabuchodonosor, the king of all the earth. If thy people had not made light of me, I would not have lifted up my spear against them. But now tell me wherefore thou art fled from them and art come unto us? "

Then Judith said to him —

"Listen to the words of thy servant, and if

thou wilt listen to me, God will do all that you wish. King Nabuchodonosor is the Lord of the whole earth, and his power lives in you for the conquest of all living beings; for not only men obey him, but the very beasts are his slaves. You know what Achior said, and I am aware of the promise that you made him. It is true that our God has told us by His prophets that He would give us up to our enemies if we offended Him, and now the children of Israel are conscious of having offended Him, and so the terror of your name weighs upon them. Besides this, their food supply is failing them, and their water is running short, and so they are reduced to killing their cattle and to consume those things that are forbidden by the law of Moses, so it is certain that they are going to their ruin. Knowing this, I, thy handmaid, have fled from them, and God has sent me to do these works with thee. For I, thy servant, am religious, and I worship God, even in your presence; and you will allow me to go out at night into the valley to pray to God, and He will tell me when they have committed their sin. And when He has told me the day of thy visitation, I will come and tell it unto thee, and I will find thee through the midst of Judæa.

thou shalt drive them as sheep without a shepherd, and a dog shall not so much as open his mouth at thee, for these things were told me according to my foreknowledge, and they were declared unto me, and I am sent to tell thee."

These words pleased Holophemes and his servants, and they marvelled at her wisdom and said :—

"There is not such a woman from one end of the earth to the other, both for beauty of face and wisdom."

And Holophemes said to her :—

"God hath done well to send thee before the people, that strength might be in our hands, and destruction upon them that lightly regard my lord. And as thy promises are good, thy God shall be my God also, if He does as thou sayest, and thou shalt be great in the house of Nabuchodonosor, and thy name shall be glorified in all the world."

Then he ordered her to be brought into his banqueting chamber, and ordered them to prepare his own meats for her, and that she should drink of his wine.

But Judith said :—

"I cannot eat anything that you offer me, lest

I commit an offence, but I will eat what I have brought with me."

Then Holophemes replied:—

"But what wilt thou do if thy provisions fail?"

And Judith replied:—

"Thy hand maid shall not spend those things that I have before the Lord work by mine hand the things that He hath determined."

Then the servants of Holophemes took her into the tent that Holophemes had allotted her, and as she went in she asked whether she might be allowed to go out every night to pray, and she sent to Holophemes, saying:—

"Let my lord command that thine handmaid may go forth unto prayer."

Holophemes accordingly gave the sentinels orders to let her go in and out as she wished, and so for three nights she went into the valley of Bethulia, and washed herself in the camp, at the fountain of water, and when she came out she used to beseech the God of Israel to direct her way to avenge the children of Israel. So she came in clean and remained in the tent until she ate her evening meal.

On the fourth day what was destined to happen happened. Holophemes gave a great feast to his

servants and told Bagoas, the eunuch, to go and persuade the Jewish woman to come in and eat and drink and spend the night with him, as it would be a shame for him if he were to let such a woman go without having had her company, for she would laugh him to scorn if he did not allure and induce her to submit to his embraces.

Then Bagoas went to Judith's tent and said to her —

“Let not this beautiful woman fear to come to my lord and to be honoured in his presence, and to eat at his side and to drink the wine of enjoyment with him and to be as one of the daughters of the Assyrians, who serve in the house of Nabuchodonosor.”

And Judith replied —

Who am I to gainsay my lord? Surely whatever pleaseth him I will do speedily, and it shall be my joy unto the day of my death.”

So she arose, put on all her ornaments, and when she came in and sat down Holophernes' heart was delighted with her, and his mind was moved, for he was ardent in the desire that he felt for her, and he wished to deceive her, and he said to her

“Drink now, and be merry with us.”

And Judith replied —

"I will drink now, my lord, and do whatever you wish, for I shall reckon this day as the best of my life since I was born."

And she sat down beside him, and ate and drank before him what her maid had prepared, and Holophemes was very delighted with her and drank much more wine than he had drunk at any time in one day since he was born.

When the evening was come, his servants made haste to depart, and Bagoas was the last to leave, and shut his tent from without, for they were all tired, as the feast had been long.

Holophemes was lying upon his bed intoxicated, and Judith was in the room alone with him. She had told her servant to wait until she came out, as she did daily, for she said she should go as usual to her prayers : so she was quite alone.

Then, standing by his bed, and praying with tears, she said in heart :—

"O Lord, God of all power, look now at the works of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. For now is the time to help Thine inheritance and to execute my enterprises to the destruction of the enemies who are risen against us."

Then she went to the pole of the bed, which was at the head, where Holophemes' sword

was hanging, and she took it down, and approaching his bed she took hold of the hair of his head and said —

“Strengthen me, O Lord, God of Israel, this day, and look favourably upon the work of my hands, so that I may accomplish what I have determined to do with Thy aid ”

And when she had prayed thus, she drew the sword from the sheath and said —

“Now I require all Thy strength, O Lord God! ”

And striking twice upon his neck with all her might, she took away his head from him and rolled his body off, and taking a large purple cloak which hung from a pillar, she put the head into it and went out, and gave her servant the head of Holo-phemes to put into the basket. Then, according to their custom every night, they both went out, as if they were going to pray, and traversing the camp, and taking a circuitous road through the valley, they reached the gate of the city and whilst still some distance off Judith called to the sentinels —

“Open the gate, for God is with us, to show His power in Israel ”

When they heard her voice, they called the

priests, and all made haste to meet her, small and great, for they had never hoped to see her again, and they made a great fire for a light, and stood round about them. Then going up a hillock, whence she could overlook the crowd, she beckoned for silence, and whilst all listened breathlessly, she said:—

“Praise our God, who does not forsake those who trust in Him. By me, His servant, He has accomplished what He promised the children of Israel, and by my hand He has this night slain the enemy of His people.”

And taking the head of Holophemes out of the cloak, she showed it to them and said:—

“This is the head of Holophemes, the leader of the Assyrian army, and this is the purple cloak in which he was sleeping in his drunkenness. Our God is a living God, for His angel protected me both when I left here and when I arrived there, and when I returned. And God has been good, for He has not allowed my sacrifice to be complete and his handmaid to be sullied, but He has brought me back as pure and spotless as I went. Let us, therefore, rejoice in his victory, in my escape, and in our deliverance, and let us all confess that He is gracious and merciful.”

And they all worshipped the Lord and cried —
“The Lord has blessed thee for by thee He
has reduced our enemies to nothing”

And Ozias, a prince of the people of Israel, said
to her —

O daughter, blessed art thou of the most high
God above all the women upon this earth and
blessed be the Lord God who hath created the
heavens and the earth who hath directed thee to
the cutting off of the head of the chief of our
enemies For thy wonderful trust in God will
never be forgotten but will always be present in
the memory of thy people to inspire them with
the like endurance and to save them from despair,
and thy name will never be forgotten by those
who honour courage and virtue

And all the people said —

‘So be it so be it

Then Judith said to Achior —

The God of Israel, to whom thou hast borne
witness wishes to prove to thee that thou wast
right See here is the head of Holophernes who
in his pride despised the God of Israel, and
threatened thee with death saying that thou
wouldest be killed, with all the people of
Israel”

Then she sent for Achior, the Ammonite, and when he was come and saw the head of Holo- phemes in a man's hand in the assembly of the people, he fell down on his face in terror, and when he had recovered, he threw himself at Judith's feet and said :—

“Blessed art thou in all the tabernacles of Judah, and in all nations, who hearing thy name shall be astonished. Now, therefore, tell me all the things that thou hast done in these days.”

Thereupon Judith told him, and then turning to the people, she said :—

“Brethren, hang this head outside our walls, and as soon as the sun has risen, let every man take his weapons and rush out, when the Assyrian scouts will have to go and tell their leader. Finding Holophemes headless and lying in his own blood, they will be seized with terror and take to flight, and you will be able to pursue them in perfect safety, for God will tread them beneath His feet.”

Then Achior, seeing the courage with which God had endowed Israel, abandoned the faith of his nation, and became converted to the true God. He circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, and was numbered among the children of

Israel, he and all his race from that day.

As soon as the sun rose they did as Judith had told them, and it happened just as she had said.

The Assyrian scouts ran back to the camp to tell the officers that the men of Bethulia were making a sortie, but neither the trumpets, nor the orders given in a loud voice, were able to awaken Holophemes. So Bagoas went and knocked at the door, for he thought that he had slept with Judith, and therefore did not like to go in. At last, however, he made up his mind to enter, but still would not draw the curtains, as he thought he was in bed with her still, but he clapped his hands. Astonished at hearing no sound, he raised the curtain and saw the headless body of Holophemes lying in a pool of blood. Then he uttered a loud cry and went into Judith's room, and not finding her there, he understood everything, and leaped out to the people and cried:—

“One single Hebrew woman has brought shame upon the house of Nabuchodonosor, for behold, Holophemes lieth upon the ground without a head.”

When the leaders of the Assyrians heard this, they rent their clothes, and there was a great cry

of grief throughout the camp. But when the whole army heard of his death, their courage failed them, and they thought of nothing but flight, and fled every way of the plain and of the hill country, and every warrior amongst the children of Israel rushed out after them.

Ozias also sent to Betomestham and to Bebai and to Chola and to other cities of Israel, so that all might destroy their enemies. As to the Bethulians, they took possession of the enemy's camp, and seized all the booty that the fugitives had left behind, and returned with much cattle, furniture, jewels and gold.

Then Joacim, the high priest, came to Bethulia from Jerusalem, with all the priests, to see Judith, and when she went out to meet them they all said with one voice:—

"Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem, thou art the great glory of Israel, thou art the great rejoicing of our nation. Thou hast done all these things by thine hand, thou hast done much good to Israel, and God is pleased therewith; blessed be thou of the Almighty Lord for evermore. Thy heart is strong, because thou lovest chastity, and because thou hast not known any other man except thy husband. Accordingly, God has

blessed thee, and thou shalt be eternally honoured "

And all the people said —

" So be it "

It took thirty days to gather together all the spoil of the Assyrians throughout Judæa, and everything that had belonged to Holophemes, his tent, his gold and silver plate, his beds, vessels, and all his stuff And all the people gave her those things willingly, and celebrated her name on citharas

Then Judith took a harp and she sang this song to the Lord before the men, women, young men and virgins, and all the people sang it after her —

" Sing to God with timbrels, sing to God with cymbals, begin a new psalm of praise in His honour Assur came from the mountains of the North, and the multitude of his army stopped the torrents He boasted that he would burn up my borders, that he would kill my young men, and carry off my virgins into captivity But God fought against him, and delivered him into the hands of a woman, and conquered him For the enemy did not fall at the hands of a giant nor of a monster, it was Judith, the daughter of Merari.

She anointed her face with ointment, she bound her head in a beautiful turban, and put on a beautiful robe to deceive him. Her sandals ravished the eyes of Assur, and her beauty captivated him and she cut off his head with a sword. Then the camp of the Assyrians began to wail with grief, and fled before the Bethulians who were thirsty. And the sons of my damsels slew the enemy, and cut them down as runaway slaves. Sing a song to the Lord, sing a new song unto our Almighty God."

And all the people of Israel went to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, to offer burnt offerings, sacrifices and gifts. Judith also dedicated all the arms, stuffs, and the purple cloak of Holophemes, as a gift unto the Lord, and the people celebrated the feast of their deliverance for three months, and Judith was the queen of the feast.

Then every one returned home, and Judith went back to Bethulia, and was in all her time honourable to her country. She set her maid-servant free, and returned to her former pious, chaste and solitary life, and knew no man all her life. She only went out on festivals, and with great glory.

Thus she remained in her husband's house five years, and died, and was buried with her husband

a giant Our moral corruption is ugly and paltry, whilst their debauchery was grand and splendid Its reek has obscured the sky for three hundred years, and its drunken hiccoughs have resounded through history

Of all the Roman emperors of the *Decadence*, Nero was, in his way, unquestionably the greatest. Of course, to take this view of him one must look upon him from a certain standpoint We must forget what men have agreed to call the ethics of history, we must make litter of every public and private virtue, and only look at any grandeur there may be in corruption carried to extremes; that is to say, in audacity, in orgies, in the unforeseen, in licentious inventions, in one word, in the art and poetry of vice * When once we have got rid of historical and philosophical conventionalities, when once we put ourselves into the place of a decadent, when we simply look at Nero and study him as a phenomenon of our own species, as the type and model of debauchery, we are dazzled and stupefied, and it is difficult for us not to be seized by a strange feeling of admiration for him, unless we be the sternest moralists or else hypocrites

*Vide Suetonius Tacitus, and Dion Cassius (Translator)

What a mad brain must the man have had who summed up all his aspirations in these words:—

“Caligula hoped that the world would be destroyed after him. I should like it to be burnt whole and to witness it.”

What a terribly refined imagination his must have been that urged him on to change sexes, not in a dream, but in reality! To dress up as a woman, and to be solemnly married to one of his own freed men, was a mere fantastic idea, which Heliogabalus subsequently reproduced; but it was Nero alone who had the idea of changing a man whom he loved into a woman, and who ventured to carry that idea out. He insisted upon having his caprice satisfied by surgical means, and he made it his boast that he had seen it performed on his freedman, Sporus. What dreams of new experiences could such a man have had who could in such a manner enter into such extraordinary realities!

Much fun has been made of Nero's artistic pretensions. Suetonius, in spite of his apparent impartiality, and above all Tacitus, with his subtle insinuations, and others have left behind them ready-made opinions, which consist in judging of Nero as a poetaster, as a talentless musician, a

a second, or even third-rate actor. Whether his works were only mediocre we cannot decide, as we have nothing of his to judge from, but certainly they cannot have been so absolutely bad as has been said, since they excited the jealousy of a *Petronius Arbiter*,* a man of a strangely distinguished and constituted intellect, an elegant and clever writer, and of a *Lucian*, a man of unpolished genius, of rugged eloquence and of powerful imagination. In any case, we can never doubt that it was the love of art and of intellectual enthusiasm which was Nero's motive power in all that he did.

To cover Christians with resin, and to set fire to them as if they were torches, is a most certain indication of a cruel, or rather of a brutal mind; but our ideas must be very common-place if we fail to see the picturesqueness of the situation. No doubt that the verses which Nero wrote on the burning of Troy were not worthy of Homer, but there can, nevertheless, be no doubt that the scenic effect, which was the produce of his brain, was that of a great poet. No ordinary mortal, no

*He wrote the *Subyricon*, a book which cannot be rendered with decency into any modern language

(Translator)

common-place man, would have had the idea of dressing himself up as a lyric singer and of taking a lute and of going up to the summit of a tower in order to declaim his poem to the light of Rome in flames. . That conflagration lasted for six days, and destroyed three quarters of the city; but the emperor paid nobly for the pleasure which he had afforded himself, and, at his own expense, rebuilt the houses that had been burnt down, and which he adorned with grand porticoes. That fashion of embellishing his capital was, perhaps, grander and more original than the expropriations of Baron Haussmann.* And it certainly must have required a splendid capital to surround Nero's wonderful palace, a kind of town within the city, a colossal residence, which embraced within its circuit the Esquiline and Palatine hills, which had marble, alabaster and jasper columns, panellings relieved by precious stones, floors inlaid with gold, silver, ivory, and mother-of-pearl, window panes of topaz and amethyst, and innumerable suites of rooms, which were continually perfumed by

*He, as Prefect of the Seine, under Napoleon III, knocked down houses and turned out poor people, in order to make new boulevards; he is, in a manner, imitated by our London County Council. (' ' ')

showers of scented water that fell from the ceiling, and whose enormous gardens contained fields of flowers and uncultivated slopes, ponds filled with unknown fish, and forests inhabited by wild beasts. All that splendour was not the outcome of any vulgar and ordinary mind

Then again, Nero's taste for the theatre, where he was in the habit of himself acting, and for the circus, where he drove a chariot himself, indicated that he had a poet's heart. Who is the man, worthy of that name, who has not, at least once in his life, felt that curious desire for immediate popularity, that vanity of triumphing over a public taken by storm? All poets and artists, all those who have been seized by that vision of what they call beautiful and glorious, have dreamt of becoming comedians, dressed in tinsel and spangles, and exposed to the dazzled gaze of the whole world. What a poet loves more than his parents and relations, more even than he does himself, is the halo of glory. And Nero was an artist before he was an emperor, and his imperial purple was not worth so much to him as the actor's tinsel. That was not, however, a sign of lowness; it was a sign of poetry. When Vindex raised the Gauls in rebellion against him, at the

time when the Empire was tottering beneath his feet, do you imagine that the crowned singer was afraid of losing the Empire? Not at all. Insensible to the dangers by which he was menaced, he neither saw the punishment of his crimes, nor his own approaching death, nor that formidable army which was coming to avenge an outraged world, in the proclamation of Vindex; all he saw was, that Vindex spoke about him as a bad poet and a poor musician, and instead of arming his Prætorian guards, instead of calling together the Senate and of thinking about his own preservation, the Emperor exclaimed, shedding tears of rage.—

“Let him prove it! Let him find a man in the whole world who is more skilful in his profession than I am!

He certainly had in his heart the taste for the beautiful and the love of art, since he merely thought of his poetical and musical renown when he wished to destroy the universe. And Nero's whole life, and all his grandeur, in spite of all that moralists may think, is reflected in his dying words, when, hunted like a wild beast, alone and having lost his way, and ~~ing re~~ to drink the water from a pond, obliged at last to

dagger, he fell to the ground uttering these words —

"Qualis artifex pereo!"—"What an artist dies in me!"

Such a man, such a monster, could not logically be satisfied with the gentle and virtuous Octavia as his wife. He required a more highly spiced dish to tickle his jaded palate. It seemed almost impossible that he could meet with a woman who was beautiful and strong enough to gain possession of a heart that was so grandly abominable. That woman was, however, found and her name was Poppœa Sabina.

She was the wife of Otho one of Nero's favourites and whether from imprudence or calculation Otho was continually praising his wife to the companion of his pleasures. According to him, Poppœa was a marvel of beauty and of wit. It is strange, but true that this woman, who was to mark her place in Nero's life and who ought to have been already known at Court from her husband's position had hitherto abstained from appearing there. No doubt she had foreseen what her power would be when she appeared there, and she waited for a favourable time to show herself. She never appeared except at

official ceremonies, and then she was always carefully veiled; but neither did she pose as a virtuous woman, any more than Otho did as an embarrassing husband. They had already discovered that method which is generally supposed to be the outcome of these days, by which husband and wife, living beneath the same roof, each maintain their independence. Consequently, she had nothing of the ancient Roman matron about her, and rather resembled one of those Greek courtezans of the period of Perides, who were instructed in all the refinements of life, who could talk well and were instructed in the liberal arts, and who united a cultivated mind to the charms of a beautiful body and to the science of love. These sort of women exercise their power most victoriously in the close intimacy of private life, and Poppœa granted him that dangerous intimacy in order to govern him, which was very likely Otho's object as well.

The plan succeeded. Tired of hearing his friend continually boasting about this unknown woman, whom he extolled above all others, the Emperor wished to see her and to make her acquaintance, and he was immediately charmed with her. His voluptuous desires were excited by

that lovely woman, a marvellous creation, both of form and feature, and his artistic tastes feasted in an intercourse with a woman who was, at the same time, witty, charming and voluptuous. Consequently, he became madly in love with her.

It was a common matter enough to be loved by that Emperor who cared for nothing except his own sensual pleasures, but it was quite another thing to resist him, as Poppœa Sabina did. She comprehended him exactly, a man who was disgusted with too facile, vulgar amours, and who became attached to any woman who irritated his lust without appeasing it. There can be no doubt that, with all her attractions, her lot would have been the same as that of the rest of Nero's mistresses; he would have abandoned her as soon as she had yielded to his desires. But she knew how to irritate them skilfully, to manage them by semi-concessions, to inflame them by continually renewed promises of enjoyment, which she has constantly withheld, for it was not enough for her to be the plaything of an hour, and the mistress of a night, after so many others. She aspired to something higher, for she wished to become Empress, and she faced the prospect, which would have frightened a more feeble

mind, of becoming Nero's wife, without fear.

There can be no doubt that that was not what Otho wished, who would have liked to make a tool of his wife, but who had no idea of seeing her take the first place in that intrigue, and what happened to him is what always happens when men let loose a force of which they thought they were the master, but which is stronger than they are. He was overthrown by the very woman who, according to his calculation, ought to have raised him. In order to be free from every trammel, she first of all caused him to be removed from Court, and he was given the command of the army in Lusitania. From that moment, if she had liked, she could have got rid of him in a more radical manner, by having him killed, but that did not enter into her plans at that time. As long as Otho lived he was a reason for her to resist Nero, and she was too clever to get rid of such a weapon ! She had not yet absolutely conquered Nero, for he was still Octavia's husband, and before leaving Otho it would be necessary for her to make Nero repudiate his embarrassing wife, and to attain that object it would be necessary for her to contend against that terrible Agrippina, who felt

that Nero would escape her, and pass under Poppœa's influence

Agrippina was a terrible woman, and at that time she was furious at seeing all her influence gradually slipping from her grasp. She, who had spent her whole life in providing herself with that means of retreat, supreme power, she, who had remorselessly heaped crime upon crime in order to gain her object, who had reduced Claudius to the level of a brute and had then poisoned him, who had afterwards provided Nero with all kinds of pleasures and who had done all this to be absolute Empress under his name, was at last reduced to employing all means in order to preserve a mere shadow of power. The time had been when she received ambassadors sitting on a throne by the Emperor's side, when the senate met in the palace, so that she might hear the debates, hidden behind a curtain, when she reviewed the troops, and was acclaimed by the Prætorian guard as if she had been their general. But that time had long passed. Nero had shaken off the yoke of her guardianship and had allowed her to see that he intended to rule himself. Agrippina, strong in her past services, and trusting in the influence which she thought she possessed over

the soldiers, had threatened to restore the empire to Britannicus, its legitimate ruler. Nero, however, had replied to her threats by a decisive blow, for he had the pretender poisoned. Agrippina now saw herself successively deprived of all her prerogatives and honours, removed from the palace, and relegated far from all public affairs, and she had a presentiment that the next crime of her son would be directed against herself. It did not require much to make him do it. She feared Nero's marriage with Poppœa Sabina, as she thought that that new power would deprive her of the small amount of influence which she still retained, and she opposed it energetically, with all her might.

History hardly ventures to relate the terrible artifice which she had recourse to under those circumstances. She was still beautiful, with that ripe and proud beauty that has been warmed at the fire of passion, and which is as terrible as those poisons which become still more concentrated by keeping. She knew Nero's taste for monstrosities, and thought that he would recoil least at what was most terrible; accordingly, she offered herself to him, and tried to ruin his love for Poppœa by that incestuous love. Nero

hesitated, not indeed before the greatness of the crime, but before the power of the criminal. The attempt itself pleased him, for he was peculiar and headstrong, and although Agrippina was his mother, she still possessed enough charms to whet his sensual appetite, but he feared to intoxicate himself with that mysterious drink of incest, because his mother appeared to him to be too profoundly skilful, and because he was afraid of being brought under her yoke, if he yielded to her kisses. Perhaps, also, the ardent, unassuaged desire that he felt for Poppœa was sufficient to guarantee him against that new desire. At other times he might, perhaps, have allowed himself to consummate the incest and the indiscretions of Suetonius make us believe it. We know that when Nero was being carried in a litter with Agrippina, his troubled looks, his forehead covered with perspiration, his uneasy movements, and his damp toga, bore witness to the strange excitement that devoured the son when he was by the side of his mother. But this time his love for Poppœa was the stronger, and Agrippina had her trouble in vain. her last attempt was unsuccessful, and she felt that she was conquered.

But in spite of this, such an enemy was

formidable, and no one could tell to what extremities she might not go, so Poppœa decided that she must be got rid of, as the only means of having nothing more to fear from her, and at her instigation Nero resolved on his mother's death. Three times he caused poison to be administered to her, but that terrible woman, who was in the habit of baffling all crimes because she had committed them all, saved her life by antidotes, with which she had previously saturated her system. It was useless to hope that such a woman would die; she would have to be killed.

The Emperor pretended to be discouraged by Poppœa's resistance, and left her for a time, and that was enough to revive Agrippina's hopes. A reconciliation did not seem impossible to her, and she thought to employ the means that had failed her to bring it about. These renewed hopes on the part of Aggripina were exactly what Nero had hoped for, and so he became reconciled to her, spoke falsely against Poppœa to her, bestowed a few caresses upon her, in which he simulated his former ardour, and by these false confidences he succeeded in lulling her suspicions. He expressed his weariness of ruling, the happiness he had formerly enjoyed when Agrippina had

charge of that heavy burden, and how glad he should be to return to her guardianship, which, after all, afforded him tranquil pleasures, and in order to confirm his words by his deeds, he persuaded his mother to go to Calabria, to preside at some festivities, as she had been in the habit of doing when she was all-powerful Agrippina thought that she was about to regain her sway, and so she allowed herself to be persuaded and embarked

The vessel on which she sailed from Baiæ, was commanded by Anycetus, and had been secretly and expressly built in such a manner that when some hidden springs were touched, the ship would open in the middle and go to the bottom

Night hung over the sea, which was calm, and everything promised a prosperous voyage, and Agrippina, who had retired to her cabin in the stern of the vessel, was talking over her hopes with her confidant, Cresperius Gallus, and her freed woman, Asceronia Polla She told them how his love for Poppœa was the chief obstacle to her reconciliation with Nero, how that love, which had grown tired of waiting, had at last consumed itself, until it became extinguished, how Nero, who was now free, had felt himself irresist-

ably attracted to his mother, to her who had made his fortune. Had she not after all the right to share that kingdom which she had conquered alone? Who was that wretched rival who had for an instant disputed the throne with her? A woman who was strong merely in her beauty, but who was at her first crime, and who had not even dared to kill her husband. And then, again, was not she, Agrippina, as beautiful as that Poppœa? And what highly-spiced dish could Nero, who was tired of all known pleasures, find in simple adultery, which he had indulged in so often already? Now incest, on the other hand, would be something quite new. If he were once ensnared by that monstrous delight, Nero would be enchained for ever, and would be hers altogether, and she would reign as mother and as mistress combined. In that case, woe be to those who had insulted her, woe to that fool Burrhus, who was full of ridiculously honest scruples, and to that cunning Seneca, who concealed his ambition under the cloak of beautiful philosophical words! Woe to those whom she had put round Nero to keep him fast to her, and who had not feared to ally themselves with him against her! Above all, woe to that Poppœa, who, because she

had thrown her youth and beauty in the balance, had, for the moment, hoped that she would become Empress, and had urged Nero on to matricide!

Such were Agrippina's thoughts, and she allowed herself to be carried away by her hopes, and was already dreaming of regaining all her power, as she felt sure that she should succeed in her design, which had so often miscarried, when suddenly a crash was heard; the planks of the room had given way. Crespertius was crushed, and the whole vessel seemed as if it were breaking in two. It was quite dark in the ship's hold, into which Agrippina had fallen, though her fall was prevented by a beam, that prevented her from being open in the

Night hung accident or a crime?

everything produced a terrible tumult on deck, and the Agrippina, who thought that the vessel was sinking, turned to the vessel that was nearest the land, and with her confidant, fell over. That was exactly what freed woman, Asperius saw with rage that the how his love for Poppea quickly enough, for the to her reconciliation would the equilibrium, joined which had grown tired of the water into the body consumed itself, until it began to founder. Nero, who was now free, had.

It was quite dark, and they all tried to save themselves as best they could. Anycetus, who was standing up in a boat with some sailors, who knew of the plot, pushed back the shipwrecked persons who wanted to get in also. He looked about him carefully, and seemed to be trying to see somebody on the surface of the waves. No doubt he was! He wished to save Agrippina, and was reserving the place of honour for her in his boat, and Asceroina Polla, who saw the anxiety of Anycetus, thought of her own life before anything else, and in the hope of being rescued, she exclaimed :—

“I am the Empress !”

As soon as they heard those words they rowed up to her, whilst she herself tried to get to the boat, still repeating that she was the Empress, and when she got so near that they could have saved her, they killed her with blows from the oars and boat-hooks.

Agrippina, who was swimming a short distance off, had seen and comprehended everything, and happy at having escaped that infernal snare, and having lost all hope now, she profited by the darkness and Anycetus's error, to swim silently towards the shore.

There was no longer any doubt that Nero wished for her death, and all that Agrippina could do, was to delay the hour of it. As she knew that she would only hasten it if she appeared to know *anything about the plot, she, on the contrary,* pretended to be ignorant of it, and sent a freed man merely to inform Nero of the terrible danger that she had incurred.

At the moment when Agrippina's messenger arrived, Nero was consulting with Poppœa, Seneca and Burrhus, and he had disclosed to them his design of getting rid of his mother.

'She has just escaped from the snare that I laid for her and she must be implacable, and nothing can arrest her in carrying out her revenge against me. If she had perished in the ship wreck all would have been settled for the best, and I should have reaped the benefit of her death without incurring the responsibility for it. As however, I cannot kill her accidentally, I must throw aside the mask, and she shall be killed in broad daylight. What do you think about it, Seneca? How shall I set about it, Burrhus? Is the present an opportune moment? Have I anything to fear?

Seneca and Burrhus trembled and scarcely

ventured to speak, but Seneca stammered out some word about parricide and human and divine laws, whilst Burrhus, who was stronger-minded, said that the Prætorian guards would never dare to touch the daughter of Germanicus.

But Poppœa was angry at this delay and said:—

“Do you mean to be kept in a state of tutelage all your life? How long do you intend going on accepting advice from your teachers as if you were a child? Agrippina knows that you wished to put her to death, and for the future she will be continually trying to get rid of you. One of you must perish, and would you rather that it were yourself? Why delay any longer? She has lived too long already, so make up your mind at last. As long as she lives and is a constant threat to us, I will not become your wife, so if you allow her to live, you may send me back to Otho, and when I am far from you, I shall hear how you have allowed yourself to be enslaved.”

At that moment Agrippina's messenger came in, and Nero, suddenly plucking up resolution, threw a dagger between the freedman's legs, ordered his arrest, and had him executed, as being guilty of an attempt on the Emperor's life, and condemned Agrippina to death as an accomplice,

and Anycetus, who had failed in carrying out the orders he had received concerning her on board his ship, offered to execute the sentence to, make up for his maladroitness, and started with his sailors and a centurion

Agrippina was in bed when the soldiers knocked at her door, and the only servant who was with her ran away. Knowing now that all was over, Agrippina waited for her murderers, and when the centurion was the first to strike her on the head, she showed him her stomach, and said —

“Strike this stomach, as it deserves it for having given birth to Nero.”

Anycetus killed her by a blow from his dagger, and a few minutes later Nero came in, and for a long time looked at his mother's naked corpse. There were no tears in his eyes and no remorse in his heart, but he stooped down to examine her more closely, and his face grew red, not from shame, but from desire, for he slowly raised himself up, and, with a kind of lascivious regret, uttered these monstrous words. —

“I did not think that she was still so beautiful.”

For the moment, Poppœa was mistress of the situation. Octavia was repudiated and then condemned to death, and Otho, who had been

definitely exiled, bought his life at the price of complaisant silence, and Poppœa became Nero's wife and Empress. But her power merely lay in her resistance, for although she was handsome, intellectual and strong in vice, she was not a woman to fill the Emperor's heart, which was a fathomless abyss in which every crime abounded, and in which every desire boiled, where her love dissolved like a snow-flake in the sea.

Then Nero, having the bridle off his neck, gave the rein more than ever to his mad fancies. That was the period when he appeared on the stage as an actor, played the lyre and danced in public, the period when he went to Greece to compete in the Olympic chariot-races, the time when he returned to Rome with hundreds of wreaths, and made his appearance in the Forum in triumph, followed by a strange retinue of dancers, musicians, actors, prostitutes and wild beasts. That was the time when he wished that the whole world might be burnt to ashes, as long as he might witness the conflagration. “

What part could a woman take in such orgies? No matter how skilful she might be in love matters, she must soon have exhausted all her knowledge with Nero, and as soon as he

thoroughly knew her, he ceased to want her, though habit made him keep to her for some time longer. Then, however, weariness set in, soon to be followed by disgust and when once love was dead, it was useless for her to think of playing the game of ambition. At that time, the Emperor was at the most sanguinary period of his life, Seneca, who had been forced to leave the Court, was living in daily expectation of receiving his death sentence. Plautius, a descendant of Julius Cæsar, the Empress Octavia, Trageas the senator, and many others had been sacrificed and men were put to death on the strength of an unfounded accusation, of the merest suspicion, and Nero seemed to require those streams of blood to revive his extinct desires. When he required such stimulants, what could Poppœa do?

At first she was satisfied with being the companion of his debaucheries, and perhaps her influence might have lasted some time longer, if she would have kept herself in the background at the first idea of these saturnalias. But she was possessed by the recollection of her vanished power, and she could not prevent herself from occasionally alluding to it, and occasionally she would try to regain it, but she only succeeded in

irritating the monster, who ended by hating her. He heaped insults upon her, made fun of her at his debauched feasts, made her serve as a plaything for his favourites and his freedman, Tigellinus, and treated her like a slave.

She had, however, one moment of hope, for she became pregnant. Would she not gain something by this fresh tie that would unite Nero to her? But he was not formed for a father, and one day when she was reproaching him with his neglect, and was talking to him of their child that was soon to be born, he killed her by a kick in the stomach, and at her death Nero's love for women died also.

We know all about his vulgar amours. — He dressed himself up as a woman, and was married to his freedmen, Pythagoras and Doriphorus, and he had Sporus, the eunuch, operated on, and made him dress like the Emprcss, and Poppœa became nothing but something distastefully commonplace by the side of these new dreams.

Nevertheless, that woman who could inspire Nero with love will always remain as a curious and powerful type of a beautiful and strong woman, as she was able to inspire that man with desire for her, all of whose desires were monstrous,

and it was something to have opposed Agrippina and to have forced Nero to kill her, and to have done it without hesitating. She certainly belonged to that race of human beings who Baudelaire calls — '*Souls powerful for crime,*' and she retains her grandeur even when compared with Nero and Agrippina.

As for her two rivals, they were worthy of one another, like mother, like son, and the most celebrated wretches come a long way behind them. He and she form a couple, and Agrippina felt it when she offered herself to him, and Nero knew it when he touched her lasciviously in the litter.

Without Poppœa, who stood in their way, and who afforded a diversion for the Emperor's unbridled insanity, history would have seen that unheard of crime, which would have been more terrible than that of Œdipus, who was ignorant of it. History would have had to relate that sexual relation between mother and son, and perhaps Agrippina and Nero would have appeared small and paltry to us when compared to the extraordinary child to which their terrible and magnificent incest might have given birth.

BAUDVILDA.

THE following is the story of the blacksmith, Voelund, and of his amours with the fair Baudvilda, daughter of King Niduth. The bards of the Edda recount it much as follows in the Voelundarquida and the Vilkinasaga:—

One day, King Vilkin, who ruled over the Vilkinaland, in Sweden, met a *haffru*, or water-nymph, in a wood near the sea, and he made love to her, and had a son by her, who was a giant. This sōn, whose name was Vade, had a son in due course, who was small of stature, but great in mind, and he called him Voelund. When he was nine years old his father put him with Mimer,

who was the best blacksmith in Hunaland, and, consequently, when he was only twelve years old, the young apprentice was already as well skilled as his master in the art of tempering and forging steel, and it was already apparent that one day he would become the king of smiths.

As he was already familiar with human science, it did not seem as if he had anything more to learn from men, and so his father determined to take him to the two dwarfs who lived in the mountain of Kallova who belonged to the heavenly race, and who were said to provide the Valkyries themselves with arms and jewels. The dwarfs agreed to instruct Vœlund in their art within twelve months, for the sum of a gold mark. But the child so surprised them by his precocious skill that, at the end of the year, the dwarfs asked Vade to leave him with them for a year longer, promising him, in their turn, to give him a gold mark. Their design was, however, criminal and so they added this clause to the bargain, that if Vade did not claim his son on the day named, they should be at liberty to kill the child. Their idea was to set him to some very difficult work, and thus to get rid of such a skilful rival. Vade, who had agreed in order to make his son an

incomparably skilful artificer, felt a certain amount of fear when he signed the last clause, and so before he left he took his son on one side, and then, hiding a sword in the ground, he said to him :—

“If I do not come back in time, take that sword and kill yourself, rather than be immolated by the dwarfs, and so my friends will be able to sing your praises, and say that I begat a son and not a daughter.

When the year was nearly over, Vade set out, and to make sure of being in time, he got to the foot of the mountain three days before the appointed time. But he found it closed, and Vade, who was very tired, went to sleep. Then the dwarfs let loose a storm, and an avalanche swallowed up the giant, so that he could not present himself on the appointed day. At this the dwarfs were very pleased, and got ready to kill Vœlund, when he, who had succeeded in disinterring his father's sword, killed them, and then, taking the fairy tools, and laden with as much gold, silver, and jewels as he could manage to carry, he escaped from the mountain.

Having found the road to the river V' thought it would be less fatiguing

water than on foot, and he built a house that floated without ever being submerged, and thus he descended to the sea, and those who saw him passing, noticed nothing but the trunk of a tree, and never imagined that a human being was living in it

King Niduth, who was in the habit of fishing with his courtiers, one morning caught this tree in his nets, and as they were striking the wood with an axe, a voice proceeded from it, that made everybody run away

But Vœlund reassured the King, and asked to be allowed to enter his service, for he had been told that Niduth's daughter, beautiful Baudvilda was the queen of beauty amongst the Scandinavian virgins, and he hoped to conquer her heart, so he was very much disappointed when the King told him that he already had a smith, and that he had no use for his services. All that Vade's son could therefore obtain was to be asked to clean the three knives that Niduth used for cutting up his meat

One day, whilst he was washing them in the sea, Vœlund let one of them go, which was lost in the waves, but in an hour he had made another exactly like it to look at, but which was so sharp

that when the King was cutting a reindeer-pic with it, he cut the table in two, so Vœlund was obliged to confess his fault and how he had made it good. At this the King's smith was beside himself with jealousy, when he saw the fair Baudvilda applauding the stranger.

"Let us have a trial of our respective skill," he said to Vœlund. "Do you make a sword, whilst I make a helmet, and in twelve months we will test our work. If your sword cleaves my helmet, my head will be split open as well, but if my helmet resists, I shall kill you on my anvil."

Vœlund accepted the challenge, but allowed six months to elapse before he set to work, whilst the King's smith shut himself up in his workshop and worked day and night.

"Why are you not working?" the King asked Vœlund one day.

"Because I am thinking of my love."

"Who is she?"

"Your daughter."

"Very well!" Niduth replied; "if your sword cuts through my smith's helmet, I will allow you to have a kiss from Baudvilda in return for your sword."

Thereupon Vœlund wished to set to work, but

all his tools had been stolen. He remembered having seen a man prowling round his house, and said that he should know him again in the assembly of the people. Thereupon, the King called together the *thing*, or popular assembly, but Vœlund did not see the thief, and Niduth was angry because he took Vœlund's words for lies, he, however, made a statue like the man he had seen, painted it in living colours and dressed it in similar clothes to what the man had worn, whereupon the King exclaimed, as soon as he saw it

Eh! what, Régin! You have returned already from your embassy?

It was thus discovered that Régin was the thief. He was recalled from his diplomatic post and returned the tools to Vœlund.

But when he had got his tools, Vœlund remained another four months without doing anything. And when the King asked him what was the reason of his idleness he answered —

“It was the same as before, his thoughts were engrossed with love.”

Niduth then promised him two kisses from Baudvilda if he would make a sword. Vœlund then set to work and made a sword in seven days,

and he led the King to the banks of the river; then, throwing into the current a piece of wood a foot in thickness, he held his sword downwards, and the wood, pressed by the water against the edge of the weapon, was severed into two parts.

The King was astounded, but Vœlund broke the blade, and before he would make another he demanded three kisses from Baudvilda. Niduth assented, and Vœlund in three days made a second sword, which split up a piece of wood three feet in thickness.

But Vœlund again broke it, and said that he would not make another unless the King promised him the hand of Baudvilda. But the King would not consent to this.

Vœlund then made a sword in three hours, which was inlaid with gold, and led again the King to the banks of the river, and on this occasion severed a whole fir tree in twain.

"This sword shall be yours," said he, "if you give me Baudvilda."

"I shall give her to you," responded the King, "if you succeed in splitting the helmet of my blacksmith."

The day when the test was to be made having arrived, the Court and the

people assembled, and the two champions appeared

The King's blacksmith carried on his head his helmet, and everyone was filled with admiration, in witnessing how fine the steel was, lustrous, inlaid, Damaskeened, something truly extraordinary. It seemed hence to everybody that never a blade could sunder it. This opinion became even more pronounced when the sword of Vœlund was exhibited to view. The cutler, in fact, had designedly smeered it with mud and even with rust, so that it looked like one of the commonest of weapons, certain to break at the first shock.

A great burst of laughter greeted the appearance of Vœlund and the King's blacksmith was self-satisfied and proud.

He sat down, full of confidence, on the high seat which had been prepared for him in the centre of the arena.

Vœlund advanced, amidst a storm of low jokes, and gently placed his sword on the helmet.

"Do you feel the cold of my blade?"

"Strike, if you want me to feel it."

Vœlund contented himself by leaning harder.

"Do you feel it now?"

"I feel as though a feather tickled me, as though a jet of water trickled off me; strike then."

"Very well! get up."

The blacksmith essayed to rise, but Vœlund pressed down still harder, and, without striking a single blow, simply by the sharp edge of the steel, he sundered the helmet, and the spectators saw the King's blacksmith fall forward in two pieces, severed as far down as the waist.

"Give me the sword," said the King.

"Give me Baudvilda," said Vœlund.

"She is yours," responded Niduth, "and the marriage shall be celebrated in a month."

But Vœlund was unwilling to give away so beautiful and so good a sword. So taking it back from the King, under the pretext of cleaning and refurbishing it, he sent him another similar in shape, though of an inferior temper. Niduth perceiving this, broke off the marriage and chased Vœlund ignominiously from his court.

Baudvilda, too, was very angry with Vœlund, who had preferred his sword to the love of Baudvilda.

Vœlund went away to rejoin his brothers, Egill and Slagfid, and the three together erected a dwelling-place in the Oulfdal. They passed their time

skating and hunting game on Lake Oulfsiar. The skates and the arms which Vœlund had made for them were so remarkable that even the birds spoke of them.

One day they found on the banks of the lake three young girls who were spinning. By the side of them lay the skins of three ostriches and the brothers knew that they were Walkyries. They were called Svanhvita, Alruna and Alvita, and they went to live with Egill, Slagfid and Vœlund. Vœlund made for them incomparable jewels, and they slept for seven winters in the beds of the three young men.

King Niduth, on hearing of their good fortune was envious, and the beautiful Baudvilda was even more wrathful against Vœlund, who had forgotten her love for that of a Walkyrie concubine.

The eighth winter, the three goddesses were compelled to depart in order to complete their destiny, and they resumed their ostrich wings and flew away, and when the three hunters returned they found their dwelling empty. The two others were unconsolable, but Vœlund quietly resumed his work, believing art to be preferable to a woman, even a celestial woman, and while Egill

set out towards the East in order to find Alruna and Slagfid towards the South in order to find Svanhvita, the artist remained in his workshop, continued to make beautiful arms and beautiful jewels, and found himself sufficiently recompensed by the admiration which they called forth.

One day when he had melted all his bright gold to make rings from it, and when he had hung seven hundred of them, in a row, on a water-willow stem, he set out on a long hunting expedition, so as to make provision for the winter, and to be in a position afterwards to labour contentedly.

Niduth heard of this, and was glad at heart in consequence, for he meditated evil things against the artist.

One night he set out with his soldiers, whose cuirasses were studded with nails, while their bucklers glittered in the moonlight like terrestrial moons.

They forced their way into the dwelling of Voelund and counted the seven hundred rings of yellow gold, which they returned to their places, with the exception of one, and they concealed near by and waited the return of the artist.

He returned from the chase the same night, did

this skilful archer, and he brought with him great provision of reindeers, bears, seals and other game

He took off his skates and lighted a great fire of fir-wood in order to roast his repast and to rest after his fatigues

Seated in the centre of his habitation, on the skin of a wild animal he counted his rings, this man of the race of Alfes, and he discovered that he was one lacking. But he thought that he had made a mistake in his enumeration. His eyes being heavy with sleep, he postponed the counting till the morrow, when he could make an exact computation. He was indeed tired, this inveterate bear hunter, and he lay down and slept soundly in front of a great fir tree fire

His awaking was most unpleasant, for he then found himself enchained, his hands and his feet were tied together with strong cords made from fish skins, while a pack-saddle weighed down on his chest

"Who are the men that can bind the artisan," he cried "Am I not the king of goldsmiths?"

"And I," responded Niduth, "am I not the King of Oulfdal? By what right do you extract gold from my mines?"

"Gold belongs to him who can work it."

"It belongs to him who can capture the goldsmith."

But when Niduth sought to lift up the reed-stem, the rings slid into the fir-wood fire and were there destroyed.

One, however, remained in the hands of the King, the one he had stolen before the return of Vœlund. Niduth seized also the famous sword, which had cleft his blacksmith. And he returned home with his soldiers, taking Vœlund as a prisoner.

"Ah! ah!" said the Queen on seeing him, "how he foams! How his eyes roll with fury! They could only be compared to those of a bird of prey. He grinds his teeth when he sees his good sword on the hip of Niduth and his gold ring on the finger of Baudvilda."

As a matter of fact, Baudvilda had possessed herself of the stolen ring. Ah! with what contempt Vœlund now regards her!

"My father," she said, "this man has insulted me by seeking to purchase me for a bad sword. He deceived me after he had been betrothed to me by taking for a concubine the Walkyrie, with the wings of an ostrich. Let him be punished!

Ham string him, and let him be shut up in the island, Sœvar-Staud ”

This was done, and thence forward the goldsmith could no longer walk And in order to find something to eat he was obliged to work night and day on the island, and to make arms for Niduth and jewels for the Queen and Baudvilda Nobody came to condole with him, and he experienced the extreme pain of having to supply the wants of his enemies

It was then that he composed and chanted the song —

“ My glittering sword shines on the hip of Niduth, but vengeance shines still more in my eyes

“ I have sharpened the incomparable sword, I have tempered it I shall sharpen also my hatred and I shall temper it in gall

“ My bright gold ring is on the finger of Baudvilda, but my contempt, more sallow, pervades her whole body I have held the ring in my hands and I have finished it off I shall take the body of Baudvilda and finish it too

“ He wanted a scabbard for the sword, and I will make him one from the gorge of Niduth I have said it

"The goldsmith is king. The blacksmith is king. He shall kill the King and dishonour the daughter of the King. I have said it.

"For let it be known that the artist, the son of a giant and the apprentice of nymphs, is beloved."

"And my vengeance shall be as slow as that of the bears, and as fitful as that of the sea during a July tempest."

One day the two young sons of the King came to Sœvar-Staud with their parents, and the sight of the chests full of gold jewels and of precious stones, filled them with admiration, but they were not allowed to touch anything.

Vølund said to them, in a whisper:—

"Come you two alone to see me, come another day, and I shall arrange, in some way, that all this gold shall belong to you. You shall have collars, rings, as well as arms. But say not a word to the men or women of the palace, nor to anyone, that you are going to visit me here."

At an early hour next morning, when everybody was as yet asleep, the younger son of the King said to his brother:—

"Let us go and see the jewels."

"Our father has forbidden us," said the elder

Nevertheless, I should like to have a ring to present to my fiancée "

" And I should like a sword for myself "

They set out for the island They opened the chest and their eyes danced with covetousness when they plunged their hands into it

" Put on for a little that beautiful collar," said Vœlund, in passing round their necks charms of gold

Suddenly he drew towards him the chains, which were made of sharp links, and thus he decapitated them

On the morrow, people were astonished at not seeing the two young men at the court But Vœlund informed the King that he had given them bows and arrows to go and hunt bears, and that they would return with an abundant booty At the same time, he declared that he wanted to make peace, that he renounced every evil design against the King and his family, and that in a short time he would see, in witness of submission, the marvellous presents he would have to offer Niduth, his wife and Baudvilda

A fortnight afterwards in fact, he gave the King two beautiful silver cups, wrought after a divine pattern, on which were represented the likenesses

of his two sons. And to the queen he offered two ear-pendants, each made of two large sapphires, which shone with singular brilliancy. And to Baudvilda he presented a necklace, composed of fifty-six pearls, arranged in the most artistic manner, bound together by a chain of white material, which seemed at once silk and thread of gold.

Baudvilda had broken her bright gold ring and well knew that no one could mend it except Vœlund. Thus, emboldened by the present she had just received, she set out to call upon him.

"I have caused you to be ham-strung," said she to him, "but I sincerely repent of it. Will you recast for me my ring of bright gold which I have broken?"

"Baudvilda, you have acted cruelly to me; nevertheless, you know that I ought to be your husband. Give me a kiss and I shall repair your ring."

Baudvilda kissed him on the forehead, and Vœlund felt that he desired the beautiful maiden.

"Kiss me on the lips," he said.

Baudvilda did what was asked of her.

"Do you not wish to be my wife?" said the artist.

"I cannot," responded Baudvilda, "the daughter of a King could she become the wife of a slave? And surely you must know that men who have been ham strung have no longer the capacity of becoming fathers"

"But is it not you who have done that?"

"Yes, and I repent bitterly of it But what is done is done I shall become the wife of him who can make me a mother I, the Scandinavian Virgin"

Vœlund made her then drink of a sleeping potion, for he knew many things, and she relapsed into corporeal sleep, though her mind was still awake

'Sleepest thou?' said he to her

'My bodily members sleep,' she answered, "And I feel that I have no more power over them But my mind is awake, and I see everything as though I did not sleep"

'Then seest thou that thou art my wife?'

And the goldsmith took the beautiful Baudvilda, the queen of beauty, the daughter of the King, placed her on the bearskin on which he was sitting and possessed her desired body

Baudvilda left the island of Sœvar Staud, and returned to the palace without saying anything to anybody

There people became more and more uneasy because the two young men had not returned. Messengers were sent to the island to interrogate Vœlund anew. But they found his dwelling unoccupied, deserted. They found only the skin of a rein-deer, on which was written a farewell chant:—

“One has cut the nerves of my hams ; but who can cut the tissues of the mind?

“I have no longer any hams, but I have arms, and I have made wings of them. With the feathers of an ostrich I have made two white wings, and with them I have fled.

“Now I live in the air like a flitter-mouse, and I sleep on a cloud.

“The goldsmith is king, the blacksmith is king. And the king is transformed into a bird.”

Nine months passed away and the sons of the King did not return, and Baudvilda shut herself up every day in her room in order to indulge in tears ; the palace has become as dismal as a tomb without flowers.

The Queen thinks of her children and turns uneasily on her bed.

“Art thou awake, Nizuth, King of the Niares? As for me, I am always awake, my couch

furnishes me no pleasure, seeing that my sons are dead "

" I do not sleep, I think just as you do Our two sons are dead "

" Wherefore, then, didst thou do Vælund an injury? It is he who has killed them, out of revenge "

" Was it not thou who urged me on to do him an injury? It is thou who art to blame for his killing our two sons "

" No, it was neither thy fault nor mine, it was the fault of Baudvilda, who ought to have married him Oh! that she had been his wife! We should then have had our two sons and, what is more, we should have had a son-in law, skillful in his art, and who would have rendered our house the richest and the most powerful of royal houses "

Thus the King and Queen passed their nights lamenting

" Art thou awake, Niduth? Art thou awake, Niduth? Art thou awake, wife of Niduth? "

It was a strange voice that thus addressed them, a voice which came from on high

In looking about, they descried Vælund, the blacksmith, with his large white wings, sitting on the wall of the enclosure

"Where are my sons?" called out both simultaneously.

"Dead, dead. I killed them."

"But tell us, at least, where they are, that they have not been buried without sepulture, so that they may not be tossed about eternally on the waves, blown hither and thither by every puff of wind that passes, or deposited under earth which is not sacred, eaten by vipers, and gnawed by moles. Vœlund, have pity on them! Have pity on us!"

"I have pity," answered Vœlund. "For now my vengeance is complete. Scrape the silver of your two cups, O! King Niduth, and there you shall find the skulls of your two sons. Oh! Queen, you have never before seen sapphire ear-pendants like those I gave you. They are the eyes of your two sons. As for Baudvilda's necklace, it is made of their fifty-six teeth, for the elder had thirty-two and the younger twenty-four, and I bound them together by their blonde hair, worked in gold. Now you know where they are, your two sons."

"Woe be to us! Woe be to us! But their bodies, their poor bodies! Ah! we will pardon you for everything, if you will only tell us where

their bodies . are, and if you have had them buried "

" I shall tell you , but before doing so, swear to me by the sides of my ship, by the round of my bucl ler, by the bridle of my horse, by the edge of my sword, that you will not persecute my wife that you will not kill my child '

" If you have a wife and a child, we will respect them Let our oath, if it is not kept, carry eternal unhappiness to the souls of our sons "

' Very well Go to Sœvar-Staud and dig in the marsh of my prison house It is there that your two sons are, kept under the water by the weight of my anvil As to my wife, it is your daughter, Baudvilda, who is with child by me "

The next day a party was sent to look for the two corpses, and they were buried with great pomp. But Baudvilda did not assist at the ceremony

On returning, the King and the Queen embraced one another and wept

" Rise, Takrad " said Niduth at length, " rise, my most faithful servant, and go and tell my daughter, with the blonde eye-lashes, to come and speak to me "

She came arrayed in finery, but pale A large floating robe concealed her haunches

"Is it true, my daughter, that you and Vœlund slept together when you were on the island?"

"It is true," she answered.

Baudvilda died in giving birth to Virgar, the son of Vœlund.

One could hear then a voice from on high which sang: "This child is the son of a goldsmith, but he shall not be a goldsmith like his father.

"If he forges, it will be with the sword for a hammer and with helmets for an anvil.

"He shall be an invincible warrior, and the greatest of all the Scandanavian warriors.

"He will tell that the union between a goldsmith and a princess has produced a perfect man.

"He will do all that is written in the Runes as touching the son of the artisan.

"As to his mother, she is now a fairy, and it is she who bellows when women are bearing children."

A great shadow was now seen passing over the sun. It was Vœlund who flew past it. A sword fell to the earth close to the child; it was the sword Minning, with which Virgar smote the world.

This was the last weapon that was forged by Vœlund. This was the last song that he sung.

SOPHIE MONNIER.

A SHORT time before the sacred feasts of Louis XVI., M. de Saint-Mauris, governor of Joux Castle, received amongst his prisoners Gabriel-Honoré Riquetti, Count de Mirabeau. He was a young man, twenty-six years of age, renowned for his wicked head, his turbulent spirit, his gallantries, his adventures of every description, and who had already alternated between the prison and fort Ré and the castle of If. He was locked up at the instance of his father, the Marquis of Mirabeau.

The Mirabeaux were a singular family, however, the members of which, from father to son,

left behind them an unsavoury reputation. From the thirteenth century, when, coming from Italy, they established themselves in Provence, they furnished to history, or to legend, one madcap, at least, from each generation.

One of them, Jean by name, first consul at Marseilles, who responded, in the thirteenth century, to a bishop :—

“I am a police merchant, just as monsieur is a merchant in holy water.”

Honoré III., renowned for his wisdom, was minded on one occasion to expell all “limbs of the law” from a noble assembly. If lawyers were such fools, you can guess what the others would be like. The ancestor of Gabriel, Jean Antoine, was so slashed with wounds that he seemed to be made up of pieces and of fragments, having a kind of silver pillory to support his head. In that condition, he discovered the means of making himself beloved. It was he who, when presented to the Court by Vendôme, and when felicitated by the King on his wounds, answered :—

“Yes, Sire, if in quitting the flag, I had come to the Court to pay some harlot, I should have had more advancement and fewer wounds.”

To this Jean Antoine, surnamed the *brave*

Provençal, were born two other madcaps, the Marquis Victor, a maniacal political economist, and the bailiff, who said that a bad head was the proof of legitimacy of the house of Mirabeau. The one was the father and the other the uncle of the young prisoner who had entered the castle of Joux. The latter was indeed a true Mirabeau, and he was the incarnation of the whole family from his youth.

What a history he already had for a man of six-and-twenty!

He came into the world with an enormous head, and with two completely formed molars. It was almost a monstrous birth. At three years of age he had the small pox, and his countenance was as disfigured by it as if it had been struck by lightning. His infancy was capricious. Precocious in everything, highly intelligent, a traveller after a fashion of his own, curious, fantastic, resembling no one else, and his father knew not what to make of such a nature. Sometimes the marquis could see nothing in his son but that of a rude, filthy fellow, who could never be reclaimed, and sometimes he would write —

“He has a noble heart under the jacket of an infant. He has a peculiarly proud nature, always

noble, however." In short, he could find nothing better in which to describe his physical and moral nature than this sentence:—

"He is the embryo of a rowdy bully, who would like to swallow the whole world before he is twelve years old "

What was to be done with such a pupil? Is such exuberance not to be dreaded? Then what can be done with a firm pride that will not stand to be reprimanded by anybody? Two iron characters clashed one against the other, and the father unwilling to give way, decided to employ force. He put his madcap son into a pension, which went under the name of Pierre Buffière, the marquis being afraid of follies which might dishonour his name. Pièrre Buffière changed him in nothing. Always the same violent nature, the same excess of vitality. Certainly he learned, for he was fond of work; he knew Greek, Latin, English, German, Italian, Spanish, mathematics, the natural sciences, drawing, music. He could mount a horse and fence with any one; he was at once a savant and a gentleman; yes, but his character? Ah! the character remains the same—infernal! And it is, therefore, not without reason that the uncle calls his nephew le Comte de la

Madcap He was put under military discipline, with what result ! He had hardly entered the regiment of the Marquis of Lambert, when he lost at play fifty louis He was then eighteen years of age The marquis, who was avaricious, was furious and already began to speak of prison But Gabriel had not done yet A soldier in time of peace, what a weariness it became ! He secured the mistress of his colonel and decamped with his prize He was caught, he resisted, for a short time he beat the camp marshal himself On this occasion, the marquis hesitated no longer, and Gabriel began his apprenticeship in the prison of the fort of the Isle of Ré

But this fool had so many rare qualities that he could not be held for long under strict discipline He was hence released For the rest, that ought to have been a kind of schooling for him Well, yes, He is no sooner free than he fights a duel, but the duel is soon forgotten Just like our heroes in Corsica, where they fight with the enemy for the thrust. Yet this rowdy, this gamester, this libertine, is he a good officer ? No, not good, but excellent, as in everything, extraordinary

And do not think that he is the better for that.

War does not interfere with love. Quite the contrary. His large, bloated and rounded head proved anything but disagreeable to the ladies. That sort of sadness is attractive. This pate is not the head of everyone you meet. And there was certainly on that visage more signs of kisses than marks of the small-pox. This is what his uncle said:—

“The romantic perfumes that worthless fellow both with the high and the low.”

Worthless fellow, if you like, but one always had to count with him. The marquis put himself in evidence. He once more essayed to conquer his scamp of a son. There are too many temptations in the military profession. Let us make of the disbanded officer a farmer. You believe, no doubt, that Gabriel will not consent. But then, you do not know your man. Everything in which there is something to learn interests him. He will apply himself to agriculture, to the soil, to rural economy.

“I am at once astonished and terrified at the amount of pains he can take,” and the marquis assented to the proposal.

“Continue,” added the bailiff, “to take in good part the back-slidings of Count de la Madcap;

whom you rightly designate *rudis indigestaque moles*, in this way you will tame him "

The marquis at length believed his son to be worthy of him and took him to Court What a figure he cut there! Why did the marquis, who never could bear being shut up himself, lock up his son?

"It is," said he, "because he is made of different stuff from me whenever I have seen him go astray, I have concealed it; as soon as I found him do what was right, he had had his rights, as for the rest, seeing that for five hundred years people have always suffered from the Mirabeaux, who have never been constituted like others, people will still suffer from the latter, who, I promise you, will not belie the name "

Decidedly, the father has become quite reconciled to his son The *début* of the latter at the Court bore out that good opinion The bailiff asked the father for the details of the presentation, and the marquis responded —

"He astonished even those who had led a wild life They found him, everyone of them, as silly as a young mad cap "

Madame de Deufort said that he demonstrated in himself the dignity of every court that existed

or would exist. Left by himself at the Court, the young scamp made his court there; he carried off the mistresses of some people and the wives of others; he arrogated to himself the right to be outspoken, and he gave offence. The father, becoming angry, relapsed into his former bad opinion of him.

"He is," said he, "a babbler, a spendthrift, an adept at combining indecency with garrulity; one who has disgusted thirty mentors."

Folly, even to excess, is essential to youth. Our young scapegrace was not lacking in this. Sent on a mission by his father, he found an only daughter at the residence of the Marquis of Mariquan, Emèlie de Lovel, eighteen years of age, and one of the richest heiresses in the kingdom. The whole Court besieged the young lady. These gentlemen were handsome, discreet, enjoying the highest reputations.

"Would it not be great fun to snuff them all out?" thought Gabriel. "What a fine farce!"

Gabriel was twenty-three years of age. Did he love Emèlie? Yes and no. He had already loved so many women that he was never quite sure when he fell in love again. But he had loved those so little whom he had had already

that he had always felt a void in his heart. The result of this new adventure was summed up in a letter of the marquis to the bailiff —

“That pox pitted son of mine, with all his graces, natural as well as acquired, has succeeded in making himself acceptable, desirable, and, in fact, to be sought in marriage.”

And on the 29th June, 1772, the Count de la Bourrasque was married.

Marriage required an advance of money! Emèlie was a charming little thing, whom the marquis described as a *pretty character*. What had that character in common with the offspring of the Mirabeaux. Could it become accustomed to the rowdyism of a spendthrift?

A son was born to them. That was so far well, but was it not also a chain? Then they were in lack of money. The parents of Emèlie, who were angry with her, gave her nothing. The economist, who had become a grandfather, advised economy. But the young people had not a sou, only debts upon debts. Everybody was furious against that monopoliser of women. As for himself, he simply sneered at his detractors. But his father did not laugh. He intrigued against his son. Catastrophes rained on the heads

of the young couple. They were first ostracised, and then exiled by royal order to Manosque. The young rogue was, however, headstrong, and the obstacles which people opposed to him ought to have attached Emèlie more and more to him. But confound it! Emèlie also began to oppose obstacles. Regretting, probably, her foolish marriage, she received letters from a former aspirant. The husband found these letters, seized them, and was furious; and it was useless to crave pardon from him. All charm was snapped, the marriage was at an end. Mirabeau became weary of suffering for a woman who was unworthy of any sacrifice; he settled her at Manosque in order to embark on some other adventure.

Now we see him fighting single-handed against the whole world.. Beware of the first blow he will strike! It will surely be to his own advantage! He has quitted his place of exile; he is an outlaw. But he will no doubt succeed in concealing himself. In place of that, he arrived at Grasse, learned that a Baron de Villeneuve de Mirhaus had insulted his sister, provoked him by insolence, and struck him in order to force him to fight, and only succeeded in

put in prison, at the instance of that libertine

' Ah! ah! this babbler, this rascal this deceiver of women, this Court bugbear, has been trapped at last Very well Let us profit by it,' said the Marquis to himself "Let us supplicate the King, to order his chastisement, and have him exiled by a letter *de cachet* "

In the end, everybody seemed pleased The Count Gabriel-Honoré Riquetti de Mirabeau was by the order of his father closely confined in the castle of If, on the 23rd December, 1774

There he rested from so many adventures Meanwhile, he had forgotten his wife, his son his father, all the ties which bound him to society, and on his being liberated from If, he set out to travel He felt that the time had come for him to take up arms against his enemies, and he made preparations for the second period of his life, that life which should carry promised fruits to every manner of flower, the least as well as the greatest That life in which the volcano surging in his brain should suddenly belch forth, and should overwhelm the grand tribune, that life in which should be annihilated all love escapades except his uncontrollable passion for Sophie

Such is the man who was brought a prisoner to the castle of Joux in 1776.

However dangerous he may have been, he was nevertheless a gentleman, and M. de Saint-Mauris treated him as such. At the time of the sacred feasts, the governor of the castle of Joux thought it would be a becoming thing to invite his prisoner to manifest his loyalty for the new King. He proved, moreover, an excellent recruit for the poor and not very numerous noble families of the neighbourhood, who were grouped around the small town of Pontarlier. But only one house really possessed "blue blood" and rank, and it was to this house, friends of the governor, that Mirabeau was first introduced. M. de Saint-Mauris had not the faintest idea that he had thus furnished the occasion for Mirabeau's being loved, and by this love affair to render himself immortal.

The house was that of Claude François, Marquis de Monnier, late president of the Chamber of Commerce at Dôle. This septuagenarian, at once avaricious and bigoted, had married a young woman, not more than eighteen years of age, Marie Thérèse Richard de Ruffey, of a president of the Chamber of C

goyne. It was she who became the famous Sophie

Certainly no two human beings could be found who were so naturally disposed to love each other. Mirabeau, as we have said, although he was in all the strength and vigour of robust youth, had begun to feel the effects of sudden passions and of gallant adventures. He experienced that want which all men who are a little endowed experience, at least once in their lives, we mean, the want of loving absolutely and of giving themselves up, body and soul, to the promptings of deep affection.

Again, misfortunes, study, prison, had singularly matured him. He was now capable of tasting that powerful charm of perfect love, which, up till now, had escaped him in the midst of his easy orgies. He was prepared for "*une grande passion*."

As to the marchioness, she too was ready to be made the object of some one's love, she who had never yet felt any. As child and maiden, she had lived a life of ennui, between a rigid, tight-laced, and unsympathetic father, and a mother painfully devout. These two old people had never entertained but one idea, and it was

this: to marry their daughter to an old man. At first she had been engaged to M. de Buffon, the naturalist, who had earned, it is true, much glory, but who yet had attained to a very old age. Monsieur and Madame de Ruffey were not, however, to be beaten. If one old man is lost, ten others are to be found. Their choice fell on the Marquis de Monnier, and they made up for the time lost by the first engagement, in selecting a second, who was a little older still.

What a life for the young marchioness! That old man, sermonizing about everything in general, avaricious in the extreme, interfering continually in domestic concerns, was even more unbearable than her father; and for this very sufficient reason, to wit, that he was her husband. In the evenings, the only distraction that the young woman had was reading aloud to amuse her husband, or a silent game at whist with some country squires of the neighbourhood. As for love, none. Not that she did not excite the cupidity of those around her, who frequented the society of the marquis. But who were these? A few worn-out old dotards; for ever at that house, or who visited that he M. de Saint-Mauris was

our man near any other, it matters not what woman, ready to resign herself, what was he to do? Why, he would have her, and in this instance, seeing the marchioness was in love with him, what did he do? He saved her. He saved her, for fear of his own skin. He desired this woman, he already adored her. Well; he fell at her feet. She only understood that. But he was afraid of love, true love, and he escaped from his prison and sought refuge in Switzerland. To be revenged on his enemies, his father for example! Against those that he would and whom he did not dare to capture.

It was well known what a stubborn will that head of iron contained. Do you dream that he was in love, seeing that his will was conquered? He returned to the prison in order to be near Sophie.

Eh! and what a fierce struggle he had with self, alone. What folly it is to flee from love when love presents itself to you. Behold them, then, united. Shall he dare venture on this at last? Yes, and when he challenges, be sure that the latter knows what to say. The marchioness was his; and she was now no longer the Marchioness of M... She was no longer Marie Thérèse

de Ruffey; she was Sophie. But the septuagenarian! the gallant, sickly creatures, especially those Ruffeys. All those pitiful and devout provincial gentlemen! Ah! the sacred Sabbath, what was to become of it? Then there will be a noise in Pontarlier.

There is M. de Saint-Mauris, who now refuses the prisoner the slightest liberty! Double the guards! No more concessions! Enough of prison to laugh at! Confinement does a rake good! And you, madame, the Marchioness, attentively listen to the discourses of the outraged old man; and the reproaches and insults that are levelled at him; read the letters of Madame, the ex-presidentess of the Chamber of Commerce of Bourgoyne. Ah! you have the heart to become tired of the company of the amiable Marquis! Ah! the whist parties did not provide sufficient recreation for you! Ah! the insipid compliments of M. de Saint-Mauris did not satisfy your amorous desires! Well, no more whist, no more gallantries, no more society. You will be made to lead a hard life. You will be caged. Bartholomew will watch you. You will have to return to your duty, either willingly or by force. As for your scamp of a lover, that shameless *ma-*

suget that good for nothing husband who deceived his wife for your sake and for whom you have deceived your dear spouse, but this adventure will by no means be the end of his troubles. His father has been written to who is outraged at hearing of such conduct and he shall be punished as he deserves to be as a double adulterer.

Alas! this respite was only momentarily. Mirabeau understood this. Of course he adored Sophie. But was it necessary to expose her to so many vexations persecutions scandalous legal suits even to chastisements? Who knows whether by yielding now he would not appease the wrath of an angry world? He essayed the task.

At the instance of the marchioness he would return to his wife at Pontarlier. He is assured that all will be forgotten by the latter. On his part Mirabeau promised to return to the common beaten paths of married life and that he would not be guilty of any more adventures. He would return to his wife and re enter the military service. He will do all that is in his power to satisfy everybody and to make peace everywhere. He is prepared to make every submission,

provided that Sophie is happy and that the affair, which might become greivous to her, be hushed up. What force had this love, which could thus create fear in the breast of Mirabeau, the audacious, bend him to the will of others, could compel the haughty Mirabeau to sue for pardon?

But it is now too late. and all these proffered sacrifices are useless.

The Marquis of Monnier, who had demanded the return of his wife, and who had promised to treat her well, took advantage of the circumstances and essayed the role of master and persecutor.

On the other hand, Mirabeau's wife would not hear of a reconciliation, and no more would the economistic marquis, who seemed to take special pains to drive his son to extremes, by refusing him any assistance to enable him to re-enter upon a correct life. Under the orders of that barbarous father, Mirabeau is dragged from asylum to asylum. At Dijon, whither he had gone to see Sophie once more, before returning to Pontarlier, he was discovered and only escaped by precipitate flight. Madame de Ruffey, mother of Sophie, is as cruel to the latter as is the father of Mirabeau to his son. Only ~~recently~~ the whole affair presents itself

that is the arrest of the seducer. She denounces him. What is to be done? Is it any good throwing the haft after the axe? What is the use of persecuting an unfortunate?

Hoping by a bold step to disarm his implacable enemies, Mirabeau delivers himself up to the magistrate who has been charged by Madame de Ruffey with his arrest, the Count of Changey.

Happily, the Count of Changey is not a corrupt man. The misfortunes of the prisoner, his adventures, his eloquence, his love affairs, touched him. He dissuaded him from submitting so benevolently to his persecutors, none of whom bore him any good will. He counselled resistance. And, marvellous to relate, whilst the Marquis of Mirabeau and Madame de Ruffey were leaguering themselves against the poor lover, it was a stranger who saved him. The Count of Changey took boldly upon himself the responsibility of liberating his prisoner, and now we see once more Mirabeau in Switzerland.

The more the obstacles accumulated, the more the two young people loved each other, which was only the natural result of the trials that people did them. But, again, the more their love increased, the more fearful Mirabeau became. It was not

fear of himself ! On his part, he had proved that he feared neither accident nor misfortunes, and that he was ready to endure everything. But he feared what might happen to Sophie. To carry her off for good and all, and to wander with him amongst strangers would, perhaps, be the best thing to do to attain happiness. But would not such a step also make the poor girl an adventuress ever after, ruin her life, and expose her to terrible reprisals from the law, which her husband would not fail to invoke against her ?

To flee this temptation, Mirabeau voluntarily exiled himself, far away from her whom he adored, and he put a hundred leagues between his desires and Sophie. He concealed himself in Provence, in the country even of his father, whilst the latter was searching for him to punish him. Warned in good time of the hiding place of his son, the father thought that the propitious moment had now arrived when he would disembarass himself of the scamp. There, in Provence, it would not be difficult to trap him. Eight police bloodhounds were sent from Paris in order to be put on his scent. For the marquis has been intriguing against his son and has obtained this. One does not indeed know what to make

of an unjust father who thus persecutes an unfortunate son!

Once captured, it was arranged that he was to be confined in a secure citadel, in a prison from which there would be no escape, on Mount Saint-Michel. No doubt, the prison was a good one, no doubt the blood-hounds put on his track were likewise good, but one has not considered the game, whose skin has thus been sold before it has been taken and that it is more dexterous than its pursuers. For five months, Mirabeau, as though he had been merely playing a game of hide-and-seek with them, concealed himself and changed his hiding place, just as a thief would, going and coming leaving traces of himself in every direction, confounding his pursuers everywhere, passing and repassing through the hands of the police, all this without quitting Provence. The marquis was in an uncontrollable state of rage.

"This man, I tell you, my brother, will ravage the world with his detestable talents."

He soon concluded that this chase was ridiculous, and that Mirabeau, beloved by the country folks and others, who protected him and put the police off the scent, would be right in turning the laugh against his persecutors. His father next concocted

a more Machiavelian plan, which was to remain quiet, and to intercept his letters to Sophie. It was a sort of insane provocation.

"He will be sure to commit this last act of folly," said the father, "and then we will capture him; the chastisement for it will be all the more merited, and, consequently, all the more severe."

The letters of Sophie were, in fact, violent incitements to flight. Poor Sophie! Shut up with her old miser, more malignant than ever, she only wished for one thing; to break the chain which bound her, and to find again her Gabriel. As for him, ought his hand not to be forced at any risk, when he received such letters as this?

"Come, then, do you not see, that if you do not write to me, that if I do not receive letters from you, my existence is good for nothing. I read every evening your undying protestations. Ah! my dear, I repeat them after you. Yes, I swear I am yours; that nothing will change our loves; I have said it a thousand times. I cannot live without your love. I know that they have not done me all the evil they might have done, though they have done everything they could do. There is one thing that it is not in their power to do:

they cannot rob me of your affection Am I, then, never to receive from you the signal of our departure? You have told me that we would want for nothing in our hiding place, that you are a master of languages, of music and of painting; you, no doubt, think so still These things are beyond me But can I not work at home, or in a shop, be a nursery governess? Yes anything you like, provided we can be together, there is nothing that I would not do to be re-united to you Nothing would terrify me, though my present condition frightens me horribly I can no longer support it It must come to an end I repeat once more *Gabriel or death!*"

To such protestations of love, who is there that could resist them for long? Mirabeau, in spite of his strong will, had not the courage to do so for long With as much resolution as he put forth when he resolved to flee from Sophie, he returned to where she was, to carry her off He had decided everything On the 23rd of August, he boldly visited Pontarlier, and apprised Sophie of the fact The following evening, without waiting longer, Sophie, dressed as a man, scaled the wall of the garden, and on the 24th, the two lovers were re-united

At Verrières, in Switzerland, where they are, they essayed once more to conjure with the misfortunes that threatened them. Mirabeau asked to be judged *coram populo*, determined on proving that Sophie was innocent. On her part, Sophie trembled for her Gabriel, and wanted to take all the blame on herself. And this assault of noble devotedness, placed all their enemies in the cold.

Then throwing themselves into each other's arms, Gabriel and Sophie comprehended that they had only themselves to trust to, and they launched boldly forth into the world. On the 17th of September, they quitted Switzerland and journeyed to Holland, where Mirabeau hoped to find the means of earning a livelihood. Their device was now : "All is lost, except love."

They did not reach Amsterdam until the 7th of October, where we find them lodged miserably enough, in the house of a tailor, named Lequesne. Here commenced a life at once hard and agreeable, full of pains and full of delights, and which fixed itself in the heart of both as being the most happy and the most tranquil epoch of their whole existence. Mirabeau changed his name and called himself henceforth the Count of Saint-M

Under that pseudonym, he travelled without intermission, in order that Sophie should want for nothing. He gave lessons, he made translations. Two libraries, Rey and Changuyon, made use of him unworthily, and overwhelmed him with work, giving him the meanest remuneration therefor. But it mattered not. Provided that he earned a livelihood, provided that Sophie was content, Gabriel was satisfied. And in spite of all, in spite of the cruel past, in spite of the uncertain present, in spite of the future, big with tempests, they are happy.

Nine months of intimate delights, mutual voluptuousness, of inebriation, they were passing the time thus, and the two lovers only wished it to continue, when the thunder-bolt, which had threatened them for so long a time, burst over their heads.

During these nine months their enemies had not been asleep, as our lovers might well have understood. The Marquis de Monnier and the Comte de Saint Mauris, especially, had been very busy, in order to be avenged. The precipitate flight was, in their hands, a terrible weapon to be used against the fugitives. They set about the thing skilfully, intrigued, and in the end obtained a terrible judgment from the bailiwick of Pon-

tarlier. By that judgment Mirabeau was declared guilty of rape and of sèduction, and for this, was condemned to have his head chopped off, which was to be done in effigy on a painting, a fine of five livres, to be paid to the King, and forty-five livres of damages to the Marquis de Monnier. By the same judgment he was declared stripped of all his rights, covenants and domains, condemned to pay a fine to the King of ten louis, and to be deprived of all civil rights and disgraced, and to be shut up for the rest of his natural life in a house of refuge at Besançon.

One man should have protested against this odious arrest, to wit, Mirabeau's father. He, on the contrary, was rejoiced, and he started out immediately for the country, so as to prevent his son from appealing to him for assistance. He put on his track, the police roué, called Brugnères, so renowned for his dexterity. At this moment, unfortunately, the police force was at the height of its popularity. And on May, the 14th, 1777, the Count of Saint-Mathieu, given up by Holland for a consideration, was arrested, and with him, Sophie. What a fine haul for the police! What a catastrophe to the home of the

lovers! Sophie wanted to poison herself Mirabeau prevented her

"We must continue to live," said he, "we must defend ourselves"

They were both confined, Mirabeau, in a dungeon at Vincennes, a secure prison, Sophie—her own mother, Madame de Ruffey, wanted to put her in Sainte Pelagie, to horde with other young women M Lenoir, lieutenant of police, dare not attempt this, and she was put into a sort of disciplinary establishment, situated in the Rue de Charonne She was, however, soon transferred thence to the convent of Saint Claire They entered prison, without knowing in the least when they would be let out again

Three long and dismal years, from 1777 to 1780, they were compelled to pass, separated from each other and in captivity This became hence the epoch of that famous correspondence known under the name, *Lettres a Sophie* M Lenoir, the lieutenant of police, constituted himself an accomplice of the unfortunate lovers in permitting them to write and to receive each others letters

Everybody is acquainted with that correspondence, now so celebrated, and it has been not unjustly compared to that of Heloïse and Abélard

To analyse such a work is impossible. One cannot sum up in a few lines what is their everyday life, the outpourings of the heart, the recollections of a prisoner. What a number of topics, however, are embraced in these letters! What variety! What fecundity! The background is alway the same, seeing that the principal subject is love. But even that subject, usually so monotonous, is treated in a thousand diverse fashions. Sometimes it is an almost ideal love, platonic, silly, as when he calls Sophie his little mimic, his adored bow-wow, his ducky. Sometimes, indeed, it is sensual love, with all its fury, so much more terrible than it is understood to be, with all the promptings of sensation, all the boldness of desires, all the voluptuousness of dreams. It is a thousand pities that one dare hardly cite to-day, an age of hypocritical prudery, the burning expressions which were wrested from Mirabeau, arising from the unappeasable thirst of the senses. Then, alongside these inflammable passages, what a crop of luscious things! It must be understood that when he speaks to Sophie of medicine, it is to Sophie *enceinte*. Sophie who is ill, who is suffering. What concern he has for her! It seems at

moments that he is by her bed side, that he looks after it, that he is the sick nurse, standing near that dear patient And the little one who is about to see day, what forethought he has for it! And when it was born, what a joy to be a father!

Amidst these family affairs, as though to give a truce to love for a moment, we also find in these letters some entire pages devoted to some abstruse philosophical subject One feels that he was anxious to know whether Sophie thought as he thought So, with much eloquence, and reasoning, he explains ideas and opinions that he feels he ought to inspire in her These are marvels of discussion of style and of the oratorical art Religion, morals, politics, find their place in these effusions of a prisoner, whose mind is open and free Oppressed as he is, never having experienced anything under the family roof but paternal injustice, he has a horror of anything that savours of tyranny, tyranny both divine and human God, the priest, absolutism And there already rumbles in this correspondence, the formidable thunder which shall overwhelm the absolutist edifice of the whole of society From time to time, there bursts forth that inevitable revolt in biting sarcasm, in bitter irony, and we are shown

Mirabeau in a rage, furious at being calumniated, weary of being misunderstood, repeating this phrase which is contained in one of the letters :

"Just Heaven! when shall I be sufficiently degraded that people will believe me to be honest."

At this juncture, we are forced to conclude that the Marquis of Mirabeau had at length grown weary of his cruelty, for he consented to the release of his son, 17 December, 1780. Here is what he wrote to the bailiff on the subject :—

"I said to Honoré, in offering him my hand, that I had forgotten all enmity, that I desired now to be his friend, and that I hoped, one day, my son would prove a blessing to me. In consequence, he is now lodged under the paternal roof. I find that he has developed very much, especially about the shoulders, the neck and the head. He has our form, build and gait; his hair is very beautiful; he has an open countenance, and large eyes; there is much less affectation in his speech than formerly, but he has still a little of it; his manner, however, is natural and much less impetuous; with this latter exception, he is the same as you have seen him."

The same. undoubtedly, for, in spite of the

entreaties of his father and his uncle, he would not listen to anything, until he secured the deliverance of Sophie, who was still at Gen. And this is why we find him again at Pontarlier, on the 8th February, 1782, whither he had gone to constitute himself a prisoner, in order to purge his contumacy and that of his beloved

We have already seen the great orator reveal himself in his correspondence, in which he expresses himself without reserve. During the six months' confinement, he has written, in his cell, his famous *Memoires Apologetique*. The Day of Judgment is arrived, Mirabeau the Great is born. Instead of defending himself he accuses. His voice of thunder terrifies his enemies. His eloquence sways the judges. The enthusiastic council chamber is shaken by the plaudits. France and Europe devour the *Memoires*. The Monniers, the Saint-Mauris', the Ruffeys', are no longer in evidence. In fact, nobody thinks of them now. All their intrigues have aborted at the feet of the unveiled colossus. The cause is won. The absolved Mirabeau secures Sophie her liberty.

They could now become re-united, give themselves up wholly to love, and enjoy its sweets in

peace. Alas! if you think he was going to remain thus, it would augur that you know little of the human heart. At first, everything is pardoned, even the expression of the most lively sentiments. But is it not in the logic of things that happiness enervates those who are unlucky enough to be under its spell? In proportion as he has been persecuted, tracked down, imprisoned, his love increases in courage, and that of itself suffices to maintain it. He applies this augmented force to surmount obstacles, for the day he is vanquished, his charms will desert him. Again, must indeed be avowed that at the time Mirabeau made his great speech, that love had already become no more than a splendid *souvenir*. The last letters, in his correspondence, discover a singular coldness. It may be convenient here to let the guilt of the fault that had been committed fall on the person who was chiefly to blame. It is incontestable that the guilty one was Sophie. From the very commencement of the correspondence it is easy to discern that Sophie was much less in love than Mirabeau. Her letters are more frigid, more concise, and the lover does not hesitate, on more than one occasion, to complain of this. The birth of their daughter

seemed to add a fresh spur to their love. But the death of the poor little thing contributed not a little to extinguish this same love. If that bond had been preserved, and if the amiable Sophie had known how to love, like Mirabeau, there is not the least doubt that, after their deliverance, they would have become much more attached to each other. Yet, it cannot be gainsaid, Sophie was not endowed with a soul lofty enough to comprehend such a man. Mirabeau, the adventurer, Mirabeau, the prisoner, through folly, Mirabeau, the young and vigorous gentleman, had easily seduced that unoccupied woman, hardly emerged from her teens, disgusted with her old husband, a devotee and a miser. But even the little daughter, although transfigured by passion, could not raise her to the level of Mirabeau, the great man.

The proof of this is self-evident. It seems natural for a man to be more and more loved by the world, in proportion as he becomes greater and greater. The contrary was the case with Sophie. She assisted at the first triumphs of the great tribune, at that country election in Provence where Mirabeau, quitting the ranks of the noblesse, took his stand resolutely by the side of

the Tiers-Etat. From the enthusiasm which this step evoked, it was easy to foresee already that he was going to stir up the nation, after having inflamed the passions of a province. In any case, he was indisputably greater than at the epoch when he courted adventures, and when he was employing his mind as to how he could escape the persecutions of his father. He was now the great orator. Well! Sophie paid no attention to it all, as insensible to glory as she was to gratitude. She forgot her Gabriel as completely as though he had never existed. Retiring to Gien, under the pseudonym of Madame de Mallory, now delivered from the bondage of the Marquis de Monnier and the Ruffeys, she ought, at least, seeing that she no longer loved Mirabeau enough to continue to be his mistress, to have respected that name and not have loved anyone else. Thus speak those who do not know that love is a fatality, a game of hazard, and that neither logic nor justice must be expected to spring from it. But we are not going to reason on matters belonging to love, after such examples as those furnished by Sophie.

Her death was a strange one, after the life we have just been depicting. That woman, whom Mirabeau often taxed with coldness, that woman

who seems to have exhausted in her society all the force of his heart, that woman who lived no longer for him, died afterwards for another man

Who was this other man? Who is this new-comer who can replace Mirabeau in her heart? Who is the giant worthy of succeeding that colossus? Oh! a mere nobody. He is a mild mannered and well educated gentleman, who was described by the writers of the period—*nature sensible*. He called himself M de Poterat, a name as unknown as that of Mirabeau's is imperishable. This M de Poterat loved Madame de Malloreu, Madame Malloreu loved M de Poterat, and they were going to get married when the former died. Mdme Malloreu, in a fit of desperation, threw herself on the top of the corpse, in which position she gave vent to the most violent expressions of grief. The night following she hanged herself (8 September, 1789)

Can it then be, Mirabeau, that thou hast loved a woman, rendered her immortal, who died upon the corpse of another man! Poor Sophie!

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